



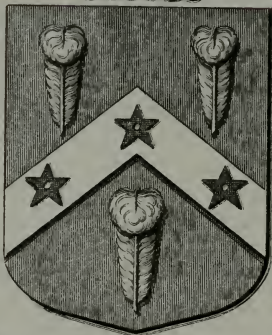
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THE
ROMANCE OF THE HAREM.

BY
MISS PARDOE,

AUTHOR OF "THE CITY OF THE SULTAN,"
"THE RIVER AND THE DESART," &c.

" 'Mid many things most new to ear and eye,
The pilgrim rested here his weary feet,
And gazed around on Moslem luxury. "
BYRON.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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THE
ROMANCE OF THE HAREM.

PART I.

CHAPTER I.

“NE oldou—what has happened?” demanded Saïfula Pasha, as his chibouque-bashi handed to him his fourth pipe, while the Cadi of the town was devoutly kissing the hem of his robe; “If my head were as large as the mountain of El Caf, which surrounds the habitable globe, it would scarcely suffice for all its duties; and if my arm were long enough to reach from Stamboul to Scanderia, it would still be too short to grasp all that it is required to hold. But speak, Cadi Almadhafer — what has happened in the city?”

“ May the condescension of my lord increase ! ” said the justice, as he lifted his head from the earth, and obeying a motion of the Pasha’s hand, assumed a sitting posture ; “ I believe that the Ibn Sheitan — the son of Satan, has arrived among us.”

“ Min Allah — Heaven forbid ! ” ejaculated the Satrap, flinging out a long thread of smoke ; “ And yet,” he added with a faint smile, as he looked down upon the pumpkin-headed, unwieldy little coward at his feet ; “ You are a wise man, Cadi Almadhafer, and moreover a lawyer — you are, therefore, fully competent to form a judgment on such a point. And how comes he to our quiet province ? Is he a sakal-siz—a no-beard, like the natives of Frangistan ? or is he in the true likeness of Eblis, horned and tailed ? Speak, good Cadi,— Mashallah ! I listen.”

“ May my lord’s lip never want a jest ! ” was the reply : “ but truly this is no theme for merriment. The baseborn stranger, who is now brawling under the very palace-walls of your Excellency, is, as I hear, (for I have never

looked upon him myself,) handsome enough to be the high priest of Anirān.* He walks the bazār like my lord himself — flings his piastres from him as freely as a padishah — feeds all the ragged pezevenks † in the city — and has given to a black-eyed almè ‡ a cachemire rich enough for a Vèzir's harem." And as he concluded this catalogue of vices, the corpulent Cadi paused for breath.

"Chok chay—that is much;" said the Pasha complacently: "he will leave money in the city."

"I sent to his house," pursued the Cadi, "to learn who he was, and whence he came, as is my wont with all strangers; and his reply was this — 'Tell him who sent you, Yuzbashi'—for to do him honour I intrusted the inquiry to the captain of your Excellency's guard—'that, when I put my beard into his hand, he shall be free to pluck it out' — and so he turned upon his heel, and left the chamber."

"Almadhafer," said the Pasha, "you are an ass"—and, having delivered himself of this opi-

* Hymen.

† Rascals.

‡ Dancing girl.

nion, he smoked on for a time in silence. "Have you never heard, Effendim ;" he resumed at length, for the Cadi had not ventured to controvert the assertion of his superior ; " have you never heard that the spur is for the steed, the koorbash for the buffalo, the capidgi-bashi for the traitor, and the hand-mirror for the young beauty ? Cadi Almadhafer, do you mean to be a dog all your days ?"

To which question the obsequious judge only replied by an emphatic " Min Allah — Heaven forbid !"

" Listen to me then ;" said the Satrap ; " let this giddy-brained stranger alone ; send no messenger to his house, ask no questions of himself—it is unseemly : but, Cadi—fold your feet upon the carpet of watchfulness ; if his servants love rakèe, let it be poured into their cups—the fiery sherbet of the Franks unlocks the lips of all men, and lays their hearts upon your hand, where you may read them at your leisure—Let him give his feasts in peace, but be careful that some of your own spies sit down to every repast — let him be fooled and flattered, and made

merry with songs and dances ; and he will surely fall into our power by some act of inadvertence, which he will be glad to buy off with gold. Shekiur Allah ! we wish him no harm ; and we have need just now of such as can pay their avanias* with an open hand !”

“ Sen bilirsen — you know best ;” said the obedient Cadi, whose disappointment at the calmness with which the Satrap received his intelligence of the arrival of a wealthy stranger at the quiet city of the pashalik was beyond his power of concealment : “ Inshallah ! my lord knows best—bakalum—we shall see.”

The hour at which the Satrap was accustomed to give audience had arrived ; and the Cadi, having once more attempted to kiss the extremity of his garment, and being condescendingly prevented from so doing, passed at once from the presence of the Pasha ; who followed slowly, supported on either side by a chaoush,† who held him up under the arms, as though he had been a cripple, as is usual with all high personages in the East ; to whom locomotion, on

* Fines.

† Officer.

occasions of solemnity, is apparently supposed to be considered peculiarly injurious. The great man was followed by two chokhadars, or cloak-bearers, his keeper of the purse, his chibouque-bashi, his cafejhe-bashi, and four soldiers of his guard.

As he made his way across the wide hall of audience to the divan at the upper end, all the applicants who thronged the doorway prostrated themselves to the earth, while the officers and individuals of sufficient rank to approach his person, bent down, and laid his hand upon their heads.

“ Alhemdullilah ! — all are sure of justice while Saïfula Pasha is Satrap of the province ; ” commenced the Pasha himself, as he took his gorgeous pipe, with its pale lemon-coloured amber mouth-piece, enamelled with blue and gold, from his chibouque-bashi ; while a second attendant slid a small brazen dish under the boudaka ;* “ Who has anything to ask from the favourite of the Padishah, the Light of the Earth, and the Lord of the 'Three Seas ? — Let him speak—I listen.”

* Pipe-bowl.

The words were yet upon his lips when an aged Jew detached himself from the crowd at the bottom of the hall, and, sinking upon his knees, made his way thus to the centre of the floor, where he flung himself with his face upon the earth. The appearance of the grey-bearded Hebrew was by no means calculated to prejudice the spectators in his favour ; his turban was of coarse cotton, of which the original colour had long been a mystery ; his brow was deeply and closely wrinkled, his quick restless eyes were partially hidden by a pair of thick and wiry eyebrows, his prominent nose was pinched and sharp, and his thin lips were pressed closely together, as though he could not part gratuitously even with his breath, without an effort to retain it. His grizzled beard hung to his girdle, which was of black woollen, and bound above an outer dress of blue and white cotton, much worn and discoloured ; his feet were bare, for the ragged papoushes which he had left at the door had been their only covering ; and altogether Yacob the Jew was as unprepossessing an individual as could well have been selected to open the divan.

But, ungainly as he was, he was not unknown to the Pasha, who stroked down his beard, as he saw the Hebrew perform his prostration ; and exclaimed, without removing the chibouque from his lips :—

“ Khosh geldin—you are welcome, Yacob : it is some time since we have seen you here. How are your affairs, Hebrew ? Is your gold in bars, or in coin ? and do you come to make us your treasurers, lest the metal should not be secure under your own roof ? ”

“ Heaven help me ! Should I venture to trouble my lord if it were thus ? Ai, ai — alas ! alas !—I come to the mirror of justice only when I am wronged, that the light of my lord’s countenance may be turned upon me, and the tears may be dried in my aged eyes — I am here to put up a complaint against my neighbour Stephanaki the serudjhe,* who has defrauded me of my just rights.”

“ Stephanaki,” shouted a chaoush close beside the Satrap ; “ come forth, and kneel in the shadow of my lord the Pasha, whose attribute is justice.”

* Horse Keeper.

The call was instantly obeyed, and a fine-looking young Greek, wearing the picturesque and becoming costume of the islands, knelt beside his accuser. Stephanaki was in the first bloom of manhood, with a laughing eye, and a sunshiny expression of countenance, which even the dread presence of the Pasha could not wholly overcloud.

“Mashallah!” murmured the Satrap to the khoja or secretary who was squatted at his feet, with his ink-bottle in his girdle, and a huge strip of parchment resting upon his knee ready to be made use of, while he dipped his calam or reed-pen into the ink in order to commence his duties: “Mashallah! this is as it should be; a dervish against a woman, and a Greek against a Jew — Bakalum—we shall see.”

A motion of the Pasha’s hand intimated to Yacob that he was to speak: and he at once commenced his complaint.

“Is not my lord as one who has sat on the right hand of the Padishah, and whose mouth has been filled with the gold of truth? In my soreness of spirit I said — ‘I will away to the

giver of health, the promoter of joy, the great and just Saïfula Pasha, for does he not hold the reins of life and death? and is he not like the sun at noonday, without which the earth would be dark?"

"Taib!—well said, Jew;" nodded the Satrap, as he toyed with his perfumed beard; and there was a sudden chorus of voices in the apartment, all murmuring "Taib! taib!"

"At the last mahāk,"* pursued the Jew, in the same humble and submissive tone, and without suffering the slightest token of elation to escape him at the approbation which his words had elicited, "came Stephanaki to my poor hut to purchase dhourra;† I was at meat, and I bade him rest awhile until my meal was finished, when I would wash, and come forth to the storehouse wherein I had housed the grain; but he pleaded haste, and thus I was obliged to leave the food almost untasted, lest he should go elsewhere, which might have been inconvenient to the poor youth."

"Had you not done better to have asked him to share it with you?" demanded the Pasha.

* Decline of the moon.

† Indian corn.

“ Now, by our father Abraham !” exclaimed the shrinking Israelite : “ would my lord desire me to eat with a Christian ? to sit at table with a filthy Greek ?”

“ True :” said the Pasha with a quiet smile ; “ I had forgotten that the two infidel drinkers of wine, the Tchifout* and the Giaour, were unclean even to each other ! Allah kerîm !—On with your tale, Hebrew.”

“ We were long ere we concluded the bargain ;” continued Yacob ; “ and I finished by selling my grain some piastres too cheap——”

“ But he *did* buy of you at last ; say you not so ?” demanded the Satrap.

“ He did ;” replied the Jew ; “ but he should have paid me at the very least——”

“ Khoja ;” said the Pasha, slowly removing the chibouque from his mouth, and looking towards the secretary ; “ write that Yacob the Jew shall, before sunset, pay an avania to the Pasha of one hundred piastres, for selling dhourra within the walls of the city, without authority — now, Hebrew, once more we listen.”

* Jew.

But if the Jew had successfully concealed his triumph when he was environed by plaudits, he was by no means so fortunate when he found himself betrayed by his own folly ; he plucked his beard until the hairs remained in his grasp, he thrust his turban awry, and wrung his hands as though he were ruined for ever. His paroxysm gave the Pasha time to reflect ; and that he had done so, he very soon gave proof, by again addressing the scribe. “ Write, likewise, that Stephanaki the Greek raïah shall also pay to the Pasha, by the same period, his avania of fifty piastres, for having purchased within the city walls certain bags of dhourra from a cheater of the revenue.”

The khoja was just about to record this second reflection of the mirror of justice, when the Greek, prostrating himself in the most approved manner, exclaimed ; “ The words of my lord the Pasha are as the diamonds of Samarcand flung forth upon the path of life. Surely my lord will suffer even a vassal to gather up some of these precious jewels, and to examine their lustre. It is true, oh, Light of the World ! that I pur-

chased the dhourra of this rascally Tchifout ; but I made him deliver it to me on the meidan* beyond the city gates. He is indeed guilty, and deserves the fine which your highness has in mercy made very disproportionate to the crime ; but I have committed no offence, as my lord will learn, when the küpeke — the cur, has told his tale.”

“ Küpeke in your teeth, dog of a giaour !” retorted the enraged Jew, glad to have secured an object on which to vent his wrath, without danger to the soles of his feet ; “ Who are you that you should fling dirt upon my head ? What are you but a Greek ? Are you not a raïah like myself ? and are you not, moreover, like the rest of your degraded race, a liar and a cheat ? — haivan der—you are an animal.”

“ Ajaib—wonderful !” ejaculated the Pasha ; “ Yacob has found his tongue, and is now head-brawler of the city ! Peace, I say, old man. Is the divan become a Theriaki-tcharchi,† or a

* Plain.

† Resort for opium-eaters, where night-brawls and heavy blows are frequent.

Timerhazè,* that I am to have my ears rent by your clamour? Take care of your own; and meanwhile, I have heard enough. Stephanaki, you have gained your cause. I am satisfied that you are a bash-pezevenk — a great rogue; for, although every Roumi† rascal can talk of the deeds of his ancestors, Mashallah! there are few among you who dare venture to speak of his own. Nevertheless, I say, your cause is gained, for you have kept your temper, and the Jew has lost his; by which I know that he is in the wrong. Write, khoja, that the Hebrew Yacob is fined fifty piastres for bringing before the Divan a cause which he could not support.”

And while the unhappy Israelite was once more giving way to a burst of grief, the mirror of justice murmured to the Cadi, who was seated near him; “The rascally Jew can well afford to pay his avania; but I question if the gidi mascara—the young scaramouch, in the embroidered leggings, does not carry all his piastres on his back.”

To which sagacious deduction, the Cadi re-

* Lunatic Asylum.

† Greek.

plied by his usual "Taib—excellent! my lord sees through the darkness of midnight—who shall dispute his wisdom?" But as he again settled himself upon his carpet, he muttered between his closed teeth: "Curse on the unbelieving Jew! he should have preferred his complaint to me—I would not have mulcted him in more than a hundred piastres in all; and moreover, he should have gained his cause.

The next applicant was a woman, who, taking off her slipper, turned the sole upwards, and demanded justice on her husband, who had put her forth from his harem, and refused to allow her a decent maintenance in the house of her father.

As her own statement went to show that she was neither young nor pretty, and that she had moreover led the unhappy man a life which had by no means tended to increase his attachment to this world, her case was soon dismissed; and she was fined twenty piastres for vague and frivolous accusations against a good Moslem, who had been careful, before the divan sat that morning, to forward to the Satrap a packet

of rare and costly gebeli,* whose aroma was actually escaping from the chibouque of the Pasha, while he listened to the tale of the wife.

In this instance, as the virtuous wrath of the Satrap was more than commonly excited, he ordained that the fine should be paid before the complainant left the court ; and remarked, moreover, that if any rumour reached him of a new application of the slipper of the miserable woman before him to the ears of her husband or his young wife, the consequences would be serious ; after which, he declared himself exhausted ; and, deputing the Cadi to the seat of justice, retired from the sight of the crowd of applicants who still thronged the hall of audience ; and, supported by his attendants, withdrew slowly and gravely to the women's apartments, to forget in the society of the beautiful Carimfil and her Greek friend the toils of the morning.

Coffee and sweetmeats were served when he had taken up his position on the sofa, and received the salutations and condolences of his companions ; after which Katinka sang to her

* Tobacco.

zebec, until the Satrap gave a few indications of drowsiness, by no means flattering to her minstrelsy ; when, anxious that he should not have cause to complain of ennui while she possessed the means of diverting his idleness, she laid aside her instrument and exclaimed suddenly : “ Let not my lord’s eyes close before he has heard the tale which I have been pondering for his amusement. It may be that it will possess the power of relieving his spirit from the fatigues of the divan and the affairs of the city.” And, as the Pasha smiled his assent, she at once commenced the narrative of:—

CHAPTER II.

THE ARAB STEED.

Ildji Rezà was the son of a rich merchant of Damascus ; and, being the only child of his father, to whose prayers the prophet had long been deaf, by refusing to his wives the honour and advantage of giving him an heir to his immense wealth, the boy necessarily became the pet and plaything of the salemlik, and the idol of the whole harem.

His beautiful Georgian mother, proud of the supremacy which the birth of her son gave her over the mind of her husband, grew haughty and imperious ; and the Buyûk Hanoum of Yezid, (for so was the Merchant called) who had been the daughter of a distinguished Emir,

retired in disgust to her father's house, and refused to return beneath the roof of her husband, however great the instances which he made to reclaim her.

The secession of the principal lady of the Merchant's establishment left the Georgian mother supreme mistress of the harem; and the fact of this ascendancy, derived from her son, only produced still greater and more ill-judged indulgence towards the boy himself: every whim however senseless, every caprice however extravagant, was not only indulged, but applauded; and he accordingly grew up a perfect imp of Eblis, both in beauty and mischief.

I say in beauty; for the experience of every day tends to convince us that the popular prejudice which peoples Jehanum with ghouls and afrits, is as false as that the tattered cloak of a Dervish always covers a saint. More than half the evil which is wrought upon earth is the work of individuals whose beards are glossy and well-combed, and whose turbans are seated upon brows as smooth as the Prophet's palm; and he who asserts to the contrary eats dirt, or has

walked from Stamboul to Mecca with his fingers in his eyes, and the skirts of his robe defiled by the abomination of ignorance.

With regard to his other attribute of mischief, I believe no one ever denied *that* to be the son of a burnt father, so I shall not insist on the propriety of my description.

Had Yezid been as rich as King Karoon, the youngster grew up in a spirit well calculated to decrease his wealth. The hours which his father believed to be spent in study in the medresh of the Mosque of Sultan Daoud, were passed among the most profligate of the youth of the city; and as all the slaves found it to their advantage to be silent—for Ildji Rezà was as generous as he was profuse—and as the worthy Merchant was descending the hill of life, and greasing the beard of years with the pillauf of dotage, he pursued his career unfettered; while such was the fascination of his beauty, and the influence of his mother, that there was not a woman in the harem of Yezid the Khawaji,* who would not have sold her jewels to minister to his caprices.

* Merchant.

But the most serious extravagance was yet to come. Suddenly there appeared in the city a dealer in horses, who brought with him animals of such surpassing beauty, that all the young men of Damascus who had ever tugged at any thing more exciting than a mahar* well nigh lost their wits. Day by day the dealer and his horses traversed the principal streets of the city; and so beautiful were many of these creatures, that more than one harem-lattice was thrown back further than it should have been, either in admiration of the glorious animals, or of the gallant young Effendis who followed in their wake. The dealer was a shrewd man: he had gathered up his feet on the mat of calculation, and spiced his sherbet with avarice: he was the very Khawaji to bring his beasts to a good market; but for a few days he affected unwillingness to part from them—he loved them as his life—called them janum, guzum—my love, my eyes, my soul — feigned to whisper flatteries in their ears, while by some subtle art he taught them to look as though they comprehended and

* Camel's bridle.

appreciated his gentleness ; and showed so much love for his already tempting merchandise, that every person who had gold to lavish on a whim, was convinced that never horses were worth so many purses as the horses of Ali the Toorkoman.

When he at length suffered himself to be prevailed on to exchange them for piastres, it need not be told that they were counted up to a good sum : and many times had Ildji Rezà been among the bidders for the different animals which were paraded one by one through the great thoroughfares of the city ; but on each occasion the Toorkoman had set him aside with a low “ Yavash, yavash — softly, softly — your time is not yet come. The camel who holds his head high is guided by the ass that leads the string ; so let my lord be led in this matter by his slave ; and, folding the skirts of patience under the feet of reason, wait yet awhile until the bit is in the mouth of the beast which is alone worthy to bear him.”

Perplexed as he was by this unaccountable conduct on the part of the Merchant, Ildji Rezà

complied in silence; but when a score of noble horses, each more beautiful than the last, had found owners among the young gallants of Damascus, the Toorkoman disappeared, much to the chagrin of the son of Yezid, who daily saw his associates galloping along upon animals to which his own, which had nevertheless been purchased at a heavy price, and given to him by his father, was but as a buffalo.

So jaundiced, indeed, was his spirit, by this unlooked-for disappointment, that ever, as his acquaintances greeted him, he seemed to see the laughter of mockery in their smile; and when they jested with him on his delay, or condoled with him on his annoyance, he felt that they were now revenging themselves for a host of petty mortifications entailed on them by his uncalculating profusion.

The young man's heart burnt within his bosom, and he well nigh fell sick with vexation; when one day, as he was walking moodily along, he was overtaken near the eastern gate of the city by a bectachy, or mountain-dervish, who saluted him as he passed with a courteous

greeting which broke in upon his reverie ; and, raising his head to reply to the salutation, Ildji Rezà on his side was at once attracted by the tone and look of the devotee.

He appeared to be about sixty years of age, but time had neither furrowed his brow, thinned his cheek, nor dimmed the lustre of his large clear grey eye. His glance was keen, fiery, and searching : his step firm and assured ; and his voice as full and melodious as though he were yet a stripling. He wore a tunic and khirkheh, or cloak of camel's hair, girt about his waist with a leathern girdle, over which flowed his snow-white beard ; while a conical cap edged with fur, crimson papooshes, and a prayer chaplet hung round his neck, completed his costume, and proclaimed his sanctity.

" 'Tis a fair day, father ;" said the young man respectfully ; " are you long from the mountains ? "

" I travelled to the city, my son ; " replied the dervish ; " some twelve weeks back, in company with a Toorkoman Arab, who sought to dispose of a string of horses ; and when I

parted from him at the khan where he had taken up his abode, I hastened to the dwelling of a kinsman, beside whose bed stood Azrael and his attendant spirits: there did I watch and pray until yesterday: and I am now on my way home, praising the power which has removed a sufferer from a world of care and misery."

"Can you really rejoice that the wings of death have folded themselves about the soul of one whose blood leaps in your own veins? and that a warm and sentient spirit is now dark in the darkness of the tomb?"

"And why not?" asked the dervish; "Do we show our love for our dear ones, by wishing to protract their period of wretchedness? Evallah! I trust that no fond heart will put up such a prayer for me."

"Did you not tell me, father, that you travelled to Damascus in company with a kiupek — a dog of a horse-dealer, who lately traded in the city?" asked the young man, for whom so melancholy a discourse possessed no attraction; and who suddenly conceived a hope that, through the medium of this holy man, he might obtain

some information, enabling him to discover the abode of the Toorkoman ; “ know you what has since become of him ? and where he is now throwing dirt on the beards of true believers ? ”

“ Ne bilirim — what can I say ? ” replied the bectachy : — “ Have I not told you that I have been the tenant of a sick room, whence the world is ever shut out ? How, then, can I give you tidings of the bazār, or of the merchants who frequent it ? ”

As he spoke, the clatter of horses’ hoofs sounded in the distance ; and soon a horseman appeared mounted on a coal-black steed of such incomparable symmetry and beauty, that even the bectachy, unused as he might be supposed to be to feel any interest in so purely worldly an object, uttered an exclamation of astonishment, and stroked down his white beard with a “ Ajaib ! ” as fervent as it was prolonged.

If the Dervish were thus affected by the appearance of the animal, it may be imagined that Ildji Rezà was transfixed : and as the rider flew past him, seeming to be traversing the world on the wings of the wind, or mounted on one of the

flying horses of Peristan, he almost shouted in the excess of his rapture.

“Wallah billah—by the Prophet ! to be the owner of that steed, I would ——.”

“What would you do, my son ?” asked the bectachy.

“Any thing that may be lawful for a good Musselmaun ;” was the reply : and Ildji Rezà heard, or fancied he heard, a low chuckle which came unpleasantly to his ear ; “Long have I coveted a steed which should have no peer. Alhemdullilah — praise be to Allah ! here he comes again !”

And it was so : the horseman had returned upon his path ; and, diverging to the right and left, and vaulting his high-blooded Arab over every impediment, he at length checked him close beside the young man and the dervish, with a suddenness that brought the fiery animal on his haunches, while the smoke issued from his transparent nostrils, and the foam flew from his mouth.

“Khosh buldûk — well found !” shouted the rider, whom Ildji Rezà at once recognized as the

Toorkoman dealer ; “ How says my lord now ? Did I not well to hold back his hand until I brought to Damascus a horse such as had never yet been seen in the city streets ?—Yavash, yavash—quiet, quiet, Thunderbolt :” he added, addressing the animal, who was impatiently pawing the earth with his small hoof : “ see you not that I would talk with the beyzadeh ?” * and the creature quailed beneath the rebuke, and stood like a statue hewn in black marble beside the path.

“ What means this, khawaji ?” exclaimed the young man eagerly ; “ Whence are you ? and why have you been so long absent from Damascus ? How many purses do you demand for this brave beast ? And how became you possessed of an animal worthy to have carried the Prophet ?”

“ Chok chay — that is much ;” smiled the Arab ; “ but I will answer my lord as I best may. It means that I have brought for him the horse of which he alone should be the owner — I am even now from the desert — I have de-

* Son of a lord.

layed my return until I deemed the animal matchless alike in speed and docility — I demand for my merchandise a price which must be paid ere I consent to make him the property of another — and I have possessed him since he sported a graceful foal beside his mother, in a green oasis, near which we had pitched our tents. Is my lord answered ?”

Ildji Rezà smiled in his turn ; “ Ai, mascara — scaramouch !” he said gaily : “ for the last moon I have been smoking the chibouque of bitterness, for I believed that you had cast ashes upon my beard ; and not a moment ago I asked tidings of you from this holy man, who travelled with you many weeks back, from the mountains !”

“ Khosh buldûk, father :” said the Toorkoman, looking for the first time towards the dervish : “ I must have eaten dirt that I did not see you when I first stopped beside the Effendi. Down, Thunderbolt, and make your salâm to the holy man.” And the obedient animal once more obeyed by sinking gently upon his knees, and laying his nose in the dust.

“ Mashallah ! ’tis a beast which might well shame many a True Believer ;” said Ildji Rezà ;

“ Bashustun — on my head be it—the horse is mine.”

“ Are the coffers of Yezid Effendi well filled ?” laughed the Toorkoman ; “ My lord has not yet learnt that the piety of a dervish and the qualities of a horse should never be taken upon trust.”

“ Nay, Khawaji, you are uncivil ;” said the young man : “ but our good father must pardon you, for you have not folded your feet upon the cushion of caution ; nor have you made slaves of your words. You should have more reverence for the khirkheh !”

“ Heed him not, Effendimou — my master ;” interposed the bectachy : “ his calling is one of light mood and free speech, and he means me no evil — his words are like the sands of the desert, they pass by, and no man inquires whence they come.”

“ W’Allah — by Allah ! ’tis well put ;” exclaimed the Toorkoman : “ when the boudaka is full, I smoke it ; but when once the ashes are knocked out, I forget the flavour of the gebeli. Phrases savouring of the sosun * and the ban-

* White lily.

nuffshah * are for the use of the harem : they are not for the wandering merchant, whose medresch † is the way-side."

"They fail you not, however, Khawaji;" said Ildji Rezà, as he hung over the coal-black Arab, and passed portions of its flowing and silky mane through his fingers, as though they had been the love-locks of a young beauty ; "But we wander from our purpose : tell me the price of this wind-winged steed, that I may count you the purses, and make it mine."

"Listen to me, Effendim ;" said the Toorkoman emphatically ; "this animal has been to me as a child — it has shared alike my tent and my repast ; my voice has become music in its ears, and my will the impulse of its being. I cannot sell it for gold — all the purses of all the padishahs of the East should not buy it — I will only part from it to secure what is yet more dear to me."

"And what, in the name of the Prophet, may that be?" asked the young man in some surprise ; "Can there be aught on earth that a man whose

* Violet.

† College.

beard is black, would value beyond an animal like this? Affiet ollah — much good may it do you. If it be in my possession, or in that of Yezid my father, it is your's."

"Taib—well said!" exclaimed the bectachy: "the words of the beyzadeh are precious as the gems of Araby—he wastes them not idly."

"Will you swear this?" asked the Khawaji calmly.

Ildji Rezà hesitated for a moment: and then, glancing at the dervish, and perceiving that he was looking towards him with a placid smile, he answered boldly; "That will I, by the soul of the Prophet!"

"Nay, we will not make the Prophet a party in the compact;" said the Toorkoman; "swear by your own hopes of Paradise, and by the beard of your father, and I am satisfied."

"Chok chay—that is much;" said the young man; "but so be it. May the houris never receive me into Paradise, and may the beard of my father be eternally defiled, if I fail you."

"Taib! taib! I say again;" exclaimed the dervish; "I love the daring of a free spirit;

and now, Khawaji, to your share of the contract — as I have accidentally been a witness to the bargain, I will not proceed on my way until I see the bridle of the animal in the hand of the beyzadeh.”

“ The horse is his, father :” said the Toorkoman readily ; “ I am willing to fulfil the pledge that I have given ;” and he placed the rein of the coveted steed in the grasp of Ildji Rezà ; who, bewildered with delight, would have vaulted into the saddle and galloped off, had not the Khawaji laid his hand upon his arm, and detained him.

“ My lord is as yet but my mir akhor ;” * he said, with a smile which almost withered into a sneer : “ I have satisfied him ; but he has, as yet, given me naught save promises, strengthened, however, by a vow which he dare not violate. It is now his turn. My demand will neither exhaust the coffers of the worthy merchant his father, nor cost himself a piastre. During my sojourn in Damascus, I chanced — it avails not how — to look into the bright eyes

* Chief of the Stables.

of the daughter of Kassim Bey — the peerless Delsaïsè Hanoum. Nay, turn not on me with that withering frown, Effendim ; the heart of the maiden is as pure as the waters of the fountain in which she was laughingly contemplating her own beauty when she knew not that any gaze was on her. From that hour I loved her—in that hour I strove to win her —But how ? As I wandered gloomily through an obscure street, I followed unobserved two portly Effendis, who were evidently on their way from some coffee-kiosque to their own dwellings. Twilight had fallen upon the city, and they believed themselves unobserved ; and thus, as they moved slowly along, they threw their words out right and left, as the mimosa-bush throws out its thorns. They were the Merchant Yezid, and his powerful friend Kassim Bey : and then and there I learnt that the beautiful and gazelle-eyed Delsaïsè was the promised bride of the Khawaji's only son. Does my lord read the writing on the parchment ?”

“ You would have the maiden for your wife ; is it not so ?” asked Ildji Reza.

The Toorkoman nodded assent.

“ If that be all ;” laughed the young man ;
“ bir chey yok — it is nothing. If you can win
her father to consent, let her be your’s ; I am no
woman-wooer, and I have renounced my claim.
I would rather have this peerless Arab in my
stable, than the fairest maiden of Damascus in
my harem.”

“ Pek ahi—it is well ;” retorted the Toorko-
man ; “ but that is not enough. Shall I strew
dirt upon my head, by asking the daughter of a
Bey for my wife ? Shall I expose myself to the
gibes and jeers of every idler like a spinning
Santon, by telling my condition and the wild ob-
ject of my desires ? I will eat sour pillauf with
no man. You must become for once an ear-
nest lover ; you must repent your first decision ;
and not content with waiting the pleasure of
a capricious mistress, and a cautious father, you
must put every art in practice to win the young
beauty *ere the next moon wanes* ; and, having
won her, you must instantly mount your trusty
steed, and enveloping the maiden in her mantle,
and placing her before you, leave the city by the
southern gate ; and never draw your rein until

you arrive under the shadow of the rock-seated tower* which overhangs the river. I will be within the walls awaiting you ; and there I will relieve you of your burthen. Will you again swear ? ”

And once more the infatuated Ildji Rezà, driven to destruction by his felech, answered gaily and readily ; “ I will.”

Little more passed that day. The son of Yezid uttered a hasty parting salutation to the Khawaji and the Dervish, who remained together ; and springing upon the noble Arab, sped, like an arrow shot by a strong arm, towards the city ; while the clatter of his horse’s hoofs drowned the laughter which followed him upon the wind.

* On the south-westerly side of the city, a small building is erected on the crest of a steep precipice, beneath which flows the Barrady.

CHAPTER III.

THE ARAB STEED — *continued.*

GREAT was the exultation of the young man when he remarked that every eye was turned upon his steed as he hurried along. In the pride of his spirit he committed a thousand extravagancies, and drew upon himself the gaze and the envy of the whole city. He passed not the habitation of one of his acquaintance without indulging his fiery horse in as many caprices and caracoles as brought all the fair inhabitants of the harem to their lattices ; and it was not until he reached his father's house, and with his usual impetuosity was himself providing for the comfort of his new acquisition, that his thoughts re-

curred to the singular contract into which he had so recklessly entered ; and then the difficulties that opposed themselves on all sides at once flashed upon him. But it was now too late to retract ; he was fettered by a vow ; and he had no alternative but to breast the stream as best he might.

When he entered the house, he accordingly shut himself into his apartment to ruminate on the most feasible method of commencing his operations ; and after mature deliberation, or what approached as near to it as Ildji Rezà was able to bestow on any subject, he left his chamber, and joined Yezid the merchant, in his own room, where he was quietly smoking his chibouque on a corner of the sofa.

“ Salām Aleikum ;” said the son, as he passed the threshold with a respectful salutation.

“ Aleikum Salām ;” replied the Merchant, without withdrawing the pipe from his mouth ; “ you are early from the coffee-kiosque this evening, Ildji Rezà ; whither are you now bound ? ”

“ I would ask to share your sofa, Effendim,

if your thoughts are not so differently engaged that my words will sound harshly to your ears."

The delighted Yezid stroked down his beard with a happy smile, as he summoned a slave with a chibouque for his unexpected guest ; marvelling, as he did so, what such an unusual proceeding might portend.

Pipes having been supplied, and the slaves withdrawn, the father and son sat for a time enveloped in the vapours of the delicately-scented gebeli ; Yezid glancing from time to time at the handsome youth by his side, with a fond pride which blinded him to the wilfulness of his disposition ; and with, perhaps, a pardonable vanity, endeavouring to trace in the high smooth brow, the large wild dark eye, the rich curved lip, and the short, thick, curling beard, a renewed picture of his own youth ; while Ildji Rezà himself was turning' over in his mind how he might best introduce the subject which was now uppermost in his thoughts.

"Effendim ;" he said at length ; "you may remember that some months back you talked to

me of bringing home a wife to my harem ; and that I made no willing reply to your suggestion, because I had never laid my head upon the cushion of quiet, and desired still to be left free to follow the dictates of my own will. What shall I say?—I have since dwelt upon your words ; and I have heard from my mother that the maiden whom you had selected for me is as beautiful as a moonbeam, and as graceful as a gazelle. What is written, is written—I will marry her !”

“ Alhemdullilah — praise be to Allah !” said the Merchant : “ the sun is at length rising in the East. My son, life has hitherto been to you like the fiery sherbets of the Franks, pleasant and poisonous : but you are now recovering from the partial insanity under which you have laboured : and flinging away the husks of the dhourra, you will at last begin to hoard the grain. But what say I ? The bey is angered by your rejection of the maiden, and may perchance not listen to a renewal of our suit. You were hasty, Ildji Rezá, to speak ere you had turned

the words on your open palm, and seen that they were good and fitting.”

The young man cast down his eyes, and remained silent.

“The wife whom I had chosen for you,” continued his father; “had been described to me as a mirror of beauty; a lily whose leaves were scarcely yet unfolded — a violet which had grown so secretly amid the seclusion of the harem, that she would have been as a jewel, which you would have dug from the mine ere another eye had rested on it. But yet forget not, my son, should my words yet prevail with the father of the maiden, that you are a man, and that your beard has grown: do not, in the contemplation of her beauty, forget that your days must not be spent in the harem of your wife—What are the loveliest maidens that they should be suffered to hold an undue empire? Like the fair-seeming flower of Caraminia which poisons the wind as it sweeps over it, the unnatural dominion of a wife enervates the mind, and weakens the energies of her husband. Never forget, Ildji Rezà, that young and beautiful

though they be, they are yet women ; and that in short, my son, they are all bosh — nothing !”

The listener nodded his concurrence to this sentiment.

“ Tell no treason to a courtier—no heresy to a moullah—and no secret to your wife :” pursued the Merchant, perceiving that the attention of his son was poured out upon his words : “ The tongue of a woman is more dangerous than the scimitar of a warrior, for you can never tell where its blows may fall ; and a wise man wastes not his words upon children. Neither put too much trust in your slaves ; but ever be vigilant yourself to protect your own honour. Why did the Prophet, who overran the world with a sword in one hand, and a houri in the other, put a veil before her face, and a lattice before her casement ? Was it not to point out how little dependance should be placed upon her own discretion.”

“ Well said, Effendim :” broke forth the young man earnestly : “ it was. But fear not for me — no kelb will dare to laugh at my

beard! — no zamparalik* for the mouths of the massaldjhes will ever issue from my harem! Inshallah, few know better than I the just value of every Aga Baba† in Damascus.”

“ And yet, my son, many have been wounded by the blade of which they well knew the temper — I have spoken.”

“ Wallah billah — by the Prophet! and you have spoken wisely ;” replied his son.

“ And if I warn you not to build up your faith on the fidelity of an eunuch ;” followed up Yezid ; “ so do I also counsel you never to let the folly of a woman ruffle your beard. Patience, my son, under the infliction of a wife’s folly, is like the red earth of our own plains, which deadens the sting of the noxious reptile that has fastened on us.”‡

“ Korkma — fear not :” returned the young man : “ your lesson shall not be lost upon me ; and now, I pray you, to hasten my suit with the

* Bit of Scandal.

† Chief of the Harem Guard.

‡ In the plain beyond the city is found a red earth which cures the stings of venomous insects.

bey, that when I close the door of my harem, I may no longer find it empty."

"Allah buyûk der;" was the only reply of the Merchant, as Ildji Rezà descended from the sofa, pressed the hand of his father to his lips and forehead, and hastily quitted the apartment.

From the presence of Yezid the young man passed at once into the harem, and made his way to the chamber of his mother.

Amidè Hanoum was still a handsome woman; and the smile with which she received her son lit up her noble features, and gave a lustre to her eye, that for the moment almost renewed her youth.

"Khosh geldin, Ildji Rezà;" she said fondly, as she flung back the heavy sleeve of her gold-embroidered antery, and extended to him her small white hand, which he immediately raised to his heart and lips; "You are welcome — and what news bring you from the city, my son? for to-day I have received no guests, and my slaves are as dull as an empty chibouque."

“ Evallah ! Damascus, fair mother, is scarcely more full of kief* than your own harem ; its antiquity,† like that of a moullah, has done no service to its beard. A caravan passed out at sunrise on its way to Aleppo, numbering among its merchants two Frank Beys, whose dinars were more plentiful than their garments, which made good sport for the idle youths who were congregated at the great coffee-kiosque ;‡ but the train soon disappeared along the banks of the Golden River ;§ and the streets are again quiet.”

“ And what errand brings Ildji Rezà, the

* Spirit.

† Damascus is said to be the most venerable city in the world ; having been built by Uz, the son of Abraham, and grandson of Shem, the son of Noah. It was, moreover, the birthplace of Abraham’s steward, Eliezar.

‡ In the city of Damascus is a coffee-house capable of containing with convenience five hundred individuals. The building is divided into two equal portions ; one being appropriated to the hot summer months, for which its arrangements are admirably calculated ; and the other to those of winter, where no less attention has been paid to the comfort of the visitors.

§ The river Barrady — formerly called by the Greeks the Chryssrrhoas, or Golden River.

pride of Damascus, to the sofa of his mother ?” asked the Georgian fondly ; “ Is his purse empty, or his head heavy from last night’s revel ?”

“ Asteferallah— heaven forbid !” laughed her son ; “ for those are two evils which have not even the charm of novelty to recommend them. Ai, ai !” and he wrung his hands as if in anguish, while a mocking light danced in his eye : “ I have been converted, and instead of gold, I am now coming to crave a wife.”

“ Wallah !” exclaimed Amidè Hanoum ; “ this is an hour for which I have long looked. How will the Khawaji Effendi rejoice, when, on his next visit to the harem, I read to him this new page in the volume of delight ! And the wife whom I have wooed for you, Ildji Rezà, guzum, is fair as the snow-flake upon the mountain ; pausing on the threshold of her loveliness, with the heart of a girl, and the beauty of a woman—the Bey her father of the best blood in the empire, and the Hanoum Effendi her mother a very model of propriety and politeness—Nay, more :” continued the Georgian, as she remarked

the indifference with which her son listened to these advantages; “it must not be breathed save between ourselves; but as you are now prepared to regard her with the eyes of affection, I may venture to whisper it in your ear — she loves you, Ildji Rezà! — She has seen you from her lattice as you passed along the street — she has watched you from her araba as you galloped along the plain — she was told that you were to be her husband — and now when she is restless, and her slaves would soothe her to sleep, they tell her tales of Ildji Rezà, for she will listen to none other.”

For the first time the young man’s breath came quick, and his lip quivered; “And she is fair, you tell me, mother?” he said, falteringly.

“As a peri!” answered Amidè Hanoum: “and when I wish to awaken her into brighter beauty, I talk to her of my son!”

“And will she listen?”

“As a hadji listens to the Koràn at the Prophet’s tomb—with clasped hands, and bowed-down head. Her soul is as a mirror which

reflects but one image, and that one is Ildji Rezà !”

The young man with difficulty suppressed the groan that rose to his lips: never until that moment had he felt how bitter it must be to sacrifice one who loves you: “’Tis at the best a mere girlish fancy;” he said, endeavouring to suppress his emotion; “were she told to-morrow that she must marry Mansoor Aga my friend, the mirror would receive a new shadow, and I should be forgotten !”

“My son !” said the Georgian, earnestly : “’Tis not given to man to read a woman’s heart ! Do you believe that the same power which fetters our actions has dominion over our souls ! Alas ! you will not be convinced ; and every day of your experience you eat the bitter apple of regret, when you might be enjoying the pomegranate of contentment. The first character inscribed upon a woman’s heart is indelible—others may follow, which for a time appear as lasting, but they are written only by her fancy or her vanity, and they are effaced by time.”

“But has she not been told that when the Bey her father offered her to the son of Yezid in marriage, he folded his hands in the sleeves of his garment, and turned away?” asked the young man: “Can she love one who was insensible to her beauty and her tenderness?”

“My son;” said the Georgian earnestly: “affection never reasons; the heart is not logical—it is content to feel.”

“And the Bey? Think you that he will yield her up to one by whom she had been slighted? He, at least, will have no advocate whispering in his heart.”

“Ildji, my son;” said Amidè Hanoum, as she held her feather-framed hand-mirror towards his glowing countenance, and his eye rested upon his own luxuriant beauty: “the nightingale turns not aside from the rose-garden of Nishapor, when he may fold his wing in peace amid the blossoms. The Bey loves his child, and he knows that thou art beloved by her; the eye of beauty is too bright to be dimmed by tears, salt and bitter enough to

mingle with the waves of the great sea beyond the desert."

"And would she really weep for me?" again demanded the young man, touched to the heart by the words of his mother.

The Georgian, for all answer, again raised the mirror, and pointed with a smile, half archness, and half pride, towards its surface, which once more reflected the image of the questioner.

Ildji Rezà sighed; and a strange curiosity grew upon him to see this lovely woman, who, amid his neglect, and his irregularities, had ventured to love him. Hitherto he had held his mother as a thing apart, which had, by some inexplicable good fortune, escaped from the pollution that had been poured forth on her sex: for the son of Yezid knew nothing of women save their vices; but he now began to believe that there might yet be others, pure, and beautiful, and loving, whose smiles would be as a foretaste of paradise. His father had told him that his promised bride was lovely as a daughter of Peristan, and his mother dwelt upon her innocence, her love, and her devotion.

Ildji Rezà fell into a delightful dream ; and when he at length left the harem, he was an altered man.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ARAB STEED—*continued.*

THE son of Yezid first bent his steps to the meidan,* resolved to restore to the mysterious Ali his ill-omened Arab; but none knew to whom he alluded. A numerous caravan was preparing to depart at daybreak on the morrow for Bagdad, and all save himself were active and preoccupied.

The space immediately around the building was heaped with merchandise; there were scimitars, carefully packed in woollen wrappers, lest the weather should destroy their brightness—sword blades, knives, curious bridle-bits, and

* A large field near the city, in which stands a caravanseraï for pilgrims and strangers, who are maintained during their sojourn there at the expense of the Sultan.

other articles skilfully wrought in iron and steel, for which the city had long been famous ; while a few bales of merchandise, of a more costly and perishable nature, were carefully heaped together a little space apart, and guarded by black slaves. The artisans, meanwhile, to the amount of two or three hundred, whose credit was involved in the safe transport of their handicraft, were shouting, cavilling, and directing, at the pitch of their lungs ; and completed the confusion of the scene.

Strings of camels huddled together, some standing snuffing the air, and others lying placidly on the earth ; their long thin necks outstretched, and their soft, sleepy black eyes, slowly rolling from one side to the other as any sudden outburst of tongues roused them slightly from their lethargy, were also conspicuous ; while in the midst of them reposed the asses which led the train. Here and there the horse of a wealthy merchant, with its softly padded saddle, and tasselled brow-band and breastplate, was led through the space by a groom ; while crowds of hungry and yelling dogs were seen in every

direction, quarrelling and fighting over the garbage which had been flung out by the slaves of the caravanserai.

A group of hadjis stood looking on from a distance ; and a few buffoons, santons, and dervishes, were gliding among the crowd ; but the merchants and their followers were too busy to heed them ; and Ildji Rezà, convinced that he should obtain no information at so bustling a moment, slowly past out of the enclosure, and entered the city gate.

Ere he left the meidan, the sun was rapidly sinking in the West ; and as his road lay past the palace of Kassim Bey, he involuntarily slackened his pace when he emerged from the covered street. On his right hand the fortress-castle, with its graceful oval, flanked with four square towers, was casting long shadows across the earth, but he heeded them not : his thoughts were occupied for the first time by a woman !

It was strange that since Yezid the Merchant had asked for his son the daughter of Kassim Bey, the young man, regardless of the honour of such an alliance, had never spent a moment

in speculating upon the probable change which it would work in his fortunes: but now — when he was conscious that to satisfy a selfish vanity, he had sacrificed all the advantages which might accrue from it, even should he yet succeed in his suit, he had worked himself into a belief that he was madly in love with the maiden; and, come what might, he was determined to judge with his own eyes whether she were worthy of all the panegyrics which had been lavished upon her beneath the roof of his father.

Coupled with this resolution grew a regret that he had spoken to his parents of his change of temper. Should they at once win the young beauty to his harem, he could have no opportunity of estimating her attractions through the medium of his own ingenuity, but must yield her up on the instant to his arch tempter, the Toorkoman. Regrets were, however, unavailing, and he at once resolved to spare neither subtlety nor danger to achieve his purpose.

In the first rush of this new fancy, Ildji Rezà thought of the Aga Baba of the Bey, who, as he judged from many a past experience, would

scarcely be proof against his gold ; but when he dwelt upon the idea of the fair girl who loved him, he resolved not to be indebted to so gross a medium for his success : and forgetting, in the energy of this new pursuit, the fearful penalty by which it was to be accompanied, he paused under the shadow of the Bey's dwelling, and sent a searching glance along the whole façade of the building. But the harem, as is generally the case, overlooked the gardens of the palace, and had no communication with the street, save by casements too high and too well guarded to admit of any ingress ; and one door, which was watched day and night by an eunuch. This difficulty, however, to the excited imagination of the young man, only added another charm to those which already encompassed his mistress ; and from gazing on the long dreary walls of the building, he turned away to follow those of the extensive pleasure grounds of the harem.

Tracing them as they clombe the gentle ascent behind the city, he noted with an experienced eye, every point which might promise advantage ; and remarked that several tall cedar trees flung

their long arms into the road beyond, as if wooing the incursion of the adventurous ; when, satisfied of the practicability of securing an entrance into the forbidden territory, he returned slowly homeward, and flung himself upon the sofa of repose.

But dawn had scarcely flooded the East, when Ildji Rezà, who had passed the night in dreams which seemed to have been steeped in the sherbet of paradise ; whose cushions had been smoothed by houris ; and whose brows had been fanned by the breezes that breathe of Peristan ; sprang from his sofa, his brain throbbing, and his pulses leaping like those of a chamois, and proceeded to the stable where he had left, half buried among the flexible leaves of the dhourra, his incomparable Arabian. If the creature were to be the engine of his misery, it might, at least, ere the dark hour came, be the instrument of his triumph ; but as he approached it, and listened while it neighed out with delight when he drew near, as though, among so many strangers, it had recognised a familiar face, he half forgot his fears, his doubts, and his misgivings, in his ad-

miration of an animal, such as he had never before beheld.

Springing to the saddle, the excited young man passed out through one of the eight gates of the city, and following the banks of the Golden river, galloped for awhile about the plain, fanned by the perfume-laden wind, and seeming to follow it in its course ; his bridle-rein hung loose upon the neck of the gallant horse, but it needed not the guidance of its rider ; and Ildji Rezà felt a proud conviction, that never before had mortal steed obeyed the unuttered wishes of him who should have pointed out its path, like the animal that he bestrode.

As he returned to the city, and passed the palace of Kassim Bey, anxious to afford to the latticed inmates of the harem a view of his skilful horsemanship, he irritated the creature both in the mouth and flank, to make him prance and caracole ; and he was conscious that he was displayed to the greatest advantage, though his seat upon the saddle continued to be as safe and as easy as though he had been upon his sofa ; while a faint scream which came to his ear from

behind the guarded casement of the women's apartments, convinced him that, however secure he might himself feel, his situation appeared by no means equally so to the lookers-on. The voice of fear had been that of a young person, for it was musical even in its terror; and Ildji Rezà forgot to speculate on the extraordinary properties of his horse, in the belief that it could have been none other than that of the fair Delsaïsè herself.

There is a charm in the voice of woman, even although it may be lifted in terror; there is a mellowness, a depth, which seem to have been drawn from the recesses of the soul — a music, which neither fear nor anguish can totally overpower — and Ildji Rezà felt it even to the remotest corners of his soul. She loved him — she feared for him — for *him*! And what part was he about to play in this strange drama? All was yet in the hands of fate; but his word was pledged — he was vowed to the ruin of loveliness and innocence — and he must abide by the pledge that he had given.

Having come to this conviction, the wisest

thing that the young man could have done would have been to avoid every opportunity of dwelling on the beauty and perfections of his promised bride ; and the sacrifice, when he was called upon to make it, would thus have been rendered less bitter ; but by that extraordinary perversity of judgment which constitutes the weakness of human nature, he not only drew from his mother, already too willing on her side to expatiate on so pleasant a theme, every particular relating to the maiden ; but, hour by hour, the inclination to look upon her grew more strong ; and, hour by hour, his reason made fainter efforts against the infatuation.

CHAPTER V.

THE ARAB STEED — *continued.*

DAY again waned ; and, as the many-coloured clouds that clustered in homage round the setting-sun, paying back in glory the light which he shed over them, were repeated in fainter tints on the ripple of the noble river, Ildji Rezà left his home ; and alone, and on foot, bent his way to the palace of the Bey.

As he passed the door of the harem, a female slave closely veiled, and muffled in a dark cloak, issued forth, and closed it hastily behind her ; and the young man felt at the moment as though the unconscious woman had shut against him the gate of paradise. In the next instant he resolved to follow her ; he could

not have accounted for the impulse — he did not seek to do so — and, for a considerable time, he contented himself with tracking her up one of the covered streets, and down another ; until, at length, when she arrived in the bazār, and he observed from the nature of her purchases, and the readiness with which she paid the price demanded, without hesitation or cavil, that they must be intended for the use of some one of very superior rank to herself, a hope grew upon him that she might even be the confidential attendant of Delsaïsè Hanoum ; and, no sooner had the idea suggested itself, than he walked quietly up to the carpet of the dealer of whom she was purchasing an embroidered handkerchief of great beauty, whose muslin centre was richly bordered with a wreath of flowers, exquisitely wrought in needle-work, with coloured silks and gold ; and, affecting to be also in search of a similar article, he turned courteously towards the female, and requested her to assist him in the selection. Thus addressed, the slave glanced from beneath her veil at the speaker, and im-

mediately saluted him with respectful deference.

“Is not my lord’s will mine?” she asked, as she turned a longer and more earnest look upon the young man; “and shall it not be even as he commands? May his days be many, and his shadow never decrease;” and she began to turn over the handkerchiefs with renewed energy; “But how may I tell the taste of my lord? were I still purchasing for my mistress, I would take this—” and she held towards him one which was wrought into a garland of minute rose-buds; “but it tells a tale of happy love, and my lord may not seek to make so soft a gift.”

“Were I sure that it would be welcome, that is the very present which I should wish to offer;” replied Ildji Rezà, looking earnestly towards her; “but if it were returned to me with a sprig of rue among its folds, I cannot tell to what my felech might drive me in my despair.”

“How say you, Hadji Ferhat?” laughed the slave, addressing herself to the green-tur-

baned dealer ; “ does my lord look like one whose love-gift is likely to be returned upon his hands ? ”

“ Mashallah ! ” retorted the crafty dealer , stroking down his beard, quite satisfied by the manner of both his customers, that there was a mystery in the affair, be it what it might, which he could not fathom, and resolved, if possible, to turn it to his own advantage ; “ Mashallah ! I would peril my whole stock of merchandise on the chance — but if my lord really wishes to make a love-gift, shall I not show him a scarf of cachemire, of the colour of the leaf that the rose shuts closest to her heart ; having a border of golden threads, wrought into a passionate ballad of the Persian poet Hafiz ? ” *

“ Ne istersiniz — what do you want to do ? ” asked the slave in affected anger ; “ would you play the Jew with the Beyzadeh, Hadji ? Do I not know the scarf ? And am I not aware that my own mistress, the beautiful daughter of Kassim

* These beautiful and costly scarfs are by no means uncommon in the East. They are sometimes inscribed with passages from the Koràn : and at others, as in the present case, with popular love ballads.

Bey—(may his weapon never rust!)—would herself have purchased it, had you not cast ashes upon your beard, by asking a price that would frighten any one but an infidel Frank?”

“And have I not a right to do so?” demanded Ferhat in his turn, with considerable asperity: “Is there such another scarf to be found in Damascus?—Bak, Effendim;” he continued, as he drew the delicate drapery from its case of cedar wood, and laid it before Ildji Rezà: “is that a thing to be cast before dogs?”

“Inshallah! no —” replied the young man, as he lifted a corner of the beautiful scarf; and with glowing cheek perused a couplet; “How many purses do you ask for this pretty toy?”

The price named was exorbitant; but Ildji Rezà scarcely heeded its amount, as he drew forth the embroidered bag containing his money, and paid down the gold without a remark: the pilgrim-merchant looking meanwhile as grave and collected as though he had only completed an honest bargain, instead of playing the knave as none but a hadji knows how to

play it ; and ringing every piece of coin separately lest he might be duped in his turn.

The slave, meanwhile, remained quietly looking on, as if conscious that she had not yet completed her share of the adventure ; but when Ildji Rezà had folded the scarf in the scarcely less beautiful muslin handkerchief, she paid for her own purchase, and after a courteous “*Salām aleikam,*” slowly moved away.

The young man was less tardy in following ; and was by no means surprised to observe that when she quitted the bazār she took a totally different road home from that by which she had come ; avoiding the close and covered streets, where at every instant she was liable to be elbowed by some passer-by ; and selecting the more open path that wound among the orchards and gardens by which the city is so thickly intersected. Nor did Ildji Rezà require to be informed of her reason for thus preferring a circuitous route, to that more direct one which would in half the time have conducted her to the door of the Bey’s harem ; but he at once gave her credit for the tact it displayed ; as most of

the gardens were enclosed by high walls, rendering the road as private as the circumstances required ; while at the same time she avoided the appearance of expecting that he would again address her.

Having at length reached a spot more secluded than any which they had yet passed, the young man quickened his pace, and overtook the attendant of his mistress, who at once understood his purpose ; and after as much hesitation as she considered necessary to enhance the value of her concession, and sundry assurances of the risk which she ran of her lady's displeasure, the scarf was transferred to her care, accompanied by a thousand hyperbolical asseverations, and a broad piece of gold, which was no less graciously received.

As they parted, twilight was falling over the earth ; and Ildji Rezà, in order to escape from his own thoughts, sauntered into the great coffee-house, and joined a party of his associates, who were smoking their chibouques, and sipping their coffee, to the music of a couple of man-

dolins, and as many small Arab drums, played upon by Jews; while two fine youths, the sons of one of the musicians, sang in alternate stanzas some of those lengthy and monotonous ballads in which the Turks delight.

“Khosh geldin, Ildji Rezà:” shouted the first idler who perceived his entrance; “you are so late that we feared you had been seized by the Wali—but gel, gel—come, come: here is room for you beside me—and these dogs of Hebrews are in full voice to-night. Wallah! I have been trying to persuade Naim to shave his beard, and expose it for sale in the bazār: it would fetch a good price, were it only because he has a pretty daughter.”

“My lord is merry to-night;” said the patient Jew, as he forced a smile at the pitiful pleasantry, and glanced down upon the long, grizzled beard which depended to his girdle; “and what am I that I should restrain his mirth.”

“Taib — well said, infidel;” laughed the young Aga; “is it not much that we suffer

such dogs, and fathers of dogs as you are, to wear beards, and to lock up their daughters?"

And his companions exclaimed simultaneously, "Chok chay—it is much."

"May it please your highnesses;" faltered out the trembling Jew, whose very lips became livid at this second mention of his daughter: "My child Sara departed for Aleppo by the caravan that left the city yestermorn at sunrise."

"Hast thou dared, Kelb?" asked Hussein Aga, removing the chibouque from his lips, and fixing his eyes sternly on the wretched old man: "By whose permission did she pass the gate? hast thou forgotten we have already taught thee that the soles of thy feet are not made of camel's hide? Why went she to Aleppo?"

The miserable Naim quailed beneath the question; "As the Prophet is in Paradise"—he began, but he was instantly silenced by a cry of "Unbeliever! Infidel! whose dog art thou that thou should'st dare to talk of the Prophet of the Faithful? Wherefore went thy daughter to Aleppo?"

The aged Hebrew wrung his hands in agony;

“She is gone, your highnesses, to nurse a sick kinsman, who is on the bed of death.”

“Alhemdullilah !” sneered another of the party : “ I have also a kinsman at Aleppo. How say you, Aga, shall we overtake the caravan, and protect the pretty Sara by the way ?”

The handsome young Aga nodded smilingly, and was about to reply, when Ildji Rezà exclaimed, “ Jew, thou liest in thy beard, for I saw the caravan pass out, and even watched the women as they mounted, and not one of thy spawn was among them.”

More threats were uttered, rather in sport than anger, by the party of young men ; and then the subject was suffered to die away ; and the Hebrews resumed their discordant minstrelsy, for which they were ultimately rewarded with quite as many curses as coins. Time, meanwhile, wore on ; and it grew deep into the night ; nor was it until every good Musselmaun had long dropped his head upon the cushion of rest, that the idle and dissolute young men, who, after the departure of the Jews, had exchanged their

coffee and sherbets for the more potent beverages of the Franks, separated each to his dwelling, with quickened pulses and throbbing brains.

CHAPTER VI.

THE ARAB STEED — *continued.*

FAR differently had the young and innocent Delsaïsè passed the early hours of the night. The slave Ziba no sooner parted from the son of Yezid, than she hastened to the harem of her master, and having delivered to the wife of the Bey the various purchases which she had made in the city, she left the apartment in search of her beautiful young mistress. She lost no time in the palace, for she knew that at this hour the fair girl was ever to be found in a garden-kiosque containing a fountain of white marble, and overlooking a small parterre, of which the flower-beds were fashioned into intricate and pleasant

forms, and filled with a variety of sweet-scented and gaily-coloured blossoms. Thither she accordingly bent her steps, but even accustomed as she was to gaze upon the lovely *Del-saïsè* at all hours, she yet paused a moment in admiration ere she entered.

The tapestry curtain was drawn aside, and the moonlight streamed into the kiosque; where, after turning the waters of the basin into liquid diamonds, it fell on the fair form of the young beauty, who lay, wrapped in a flowing robe of soft white muslin, on a divan of silver tissue. Her long dark tresses, plaited with large pearls, fell over her bosom; a crimson turban cinctured her brow; her head was pillowed upon her hand, and her large eyes were bent earthward; her *papooshes* of purple velvet sprinkled with gems lay on the carpet near the edge of the fountain; and one of her small feet, dazzling in its whiteness, hung lightly over the front of the divan.

The step of the slave aroused her from her reverie, and, as *Ziba* prepared to enter the kiosque, she started and looked up: “You are

welcome, Zibamou ;” she said, with a sweet smile ; “ you have lingered later than usual in the city, and I have wearied for you. Tell me — have you seen him ? ”

The slave seated herself upon the carpet at the feet of her young mistress, and looked up into her eyes ; “ You have then thought of him, Effendim, during my absence ; and yet, of what avail to think of one who has slighted you, scorned you, and shaken the dust from his feet as he passed your threshold ? But turn not away in anger. I have never blamed him when other tongues in the Bey’s harem have been loud and bitter ; I am not about even to chide you for your question ; but rather to tell you that you have done well, for I have talked with him in the bazār.”

“ Ziba ! my own Ziba ! ” exclaimed the beautiful girl, clasping her fair hands together in an extacy of delight ; “ this day must be marked as the happiest of my life ! And did he speak of me ? Did he ask if I loved him ? And, above all, Ziba, my dear Ziba, did he say that he loved me ? ”

“ Mashallah ! ” cried the laughing slave ; “ here are a hundred questions in a breath : why it would require the lungs of a moullah to answer them ! Listen, and I will tell my tale ; but first, oh ! Sultana, he is as handsome as the day. He has eyes — no, never, never, did I behold such eyes ! — teeth — talk to me of pearls, I say out ! pearls are as henna beside them — hands like the water-lily — and a beard — Asteferallah ! there is not such another beard in Damascus.”

“ But what did he say, Ziba ? ” interposed the anxious girl : “ I know that he is handsome enough to turn the heads of the houris — I have seen him from my lattice — Tell me rather, therefore, what he said ? ”

“ You have seen him, Effendim, say you ! ” echoed the slave, in an accent of scorn. “ You cannot even guess what he is like ! Have you eyes that will look without winking on the sun ? Sen bilirsen — you know best ; but if you have not, you have never seen Ildji Rezà.”

“ But what said he, Zibamou ? ” again urged the maiden.

“ He said,” at length commenced the slave ;

“ that he lived but for you — that his thoughts all flew to you with the force of a stone hurled by an elephant — that he dreamt of you on his sofa — that his blood turned to fire when a fear of your displeasure grew upon him—that—in short, sultana mou, if I undertake to repeat to you all he said, we shall get no further by day-dawn ; enough that he extorted from me a promise that I would meet him again to-morrow.”

“ Happy, happy Ziba !” murmured out the excited girl.

“ Nay, for that matter,” laughed the hand-maiden ; “ it is even as it may be ; do I not go to hear him talk of you ? Say rather, happy Delsaïsè Hanoum, who will be the bride of the handsomest youth in the city ; for his bride you will be, in spite of all that is past, as surely as though it had been foretold by the sagest Karabash of Damascus. Think, my sultana ; did not the pretty daughter of the Wali marry a hunchback ? Did not Isau Aga give the only child he had to Daoud Effendi, whose odious squint ever reminds one of the Evil Eye ? Has not Djamilè Hanoum thrown away your favourite playfellow,

Shereen, upon old Amin the Cadi, whose beard is as white as your own hand? Eh, vah! who is the happy one here? answer me that."

And the young beauty sighed out in her delight: "You are right, Ziba; it is indeed I."

"Guzel — good:" said the attendant: "but do you believe that nothing more passed between us? Asteferallah! Ildji Rezà is no sakalsiz! See ——" and she drew from beneath her cloak the costly present of the son of Yezid, which the maiden seized with a scream of rapture. "It will tell its own tale, and needs no words from me. But hearken, Effendi mou— my mistress; you were to have been the wife of this young man, or I would have undertaken no such mission."

The prudence, tardy as it was, of her companion, was, however, lost upon the beautiful girl, who, full of the delight of being beloved for the first time, had already pressed the offering of her lover to her heart and lips, and was now busily employed in decyphering the characters of the embroidered border. When she had read the whole, she again embraced the splendid

token of Ildji Rezà's affection ; and then, bending over her faithful Ziba, she repeated to her in a clear whisper the words of the ballad, which many a Persian maiden, almost as fair and as fond as herself, has sung to her mandolin :—

LOVE AND THE LOTUS.

FROM HAFIZ.

When, in the east, the golden sun
Has risen from his ocean bed,
And o'er the earth, so lately dark,
The glories of his brightness shed ;
The Lotus, on the river's breast,
Lifts, with deep love, her dewy eye,
And thanks him for the life and light
He sheds upon her from the sky.

At noon her loving gaze pursues
His proud career, untired, unturned ;
And when at length he slowly sets,
She watches every beam that burned,
Until the last is lost—and then
She downward bends her gentle head,
And leans in sadness o'er the stream,
To weep till morn his brightness fled.

So, lady, do I turn to thee,
Through every change, in every hour ;
Heedless of all on earth beside,
Save thy pure beauty's thralling power ;

In thy loved light I live—but when
I lose the glory of its ray,
Like to the Lotus, bowed and bruised,
My spirit weeps itself away !

“ Mashallah !” exclaimed Ziba, as the murmur of the sweet voice ceased ; “ ’tis the love-song of a peri ! And even so, Sultana, does the Effendi talk. If many of the fair messages with which he entrusted me were to be put into verse, they would make just such ballads as that ! Wallah ! what shall I say to him to-morrow in reply ?”

“ What ought you to say, dear Ziba !” asked the innocent girl ; “ you shall tell him what you will ; only forget not to assure him that I love him as the lotus loved the sun ; and that even so have I watched him when he has passed under the windows of the harem — for the rest, you know best—say to him what you will.”

“ Taib, Effendi mou—well said, my mistress ; but have you nothing to send him as a token that I am an honest interpreter of your heart ?”

Delsaisè hesitated for a moment ; young and unpractised as she was in love, she yet shrank

with instinctive delicacy from so decided a measure ; but the encouraging words and flatteries of Ziba soon won her to consent, and she ultimately severed from her head one of its glossy braids wreathed with pearls, and, having entwined it about a bunch of jasmin flowers which lay beside her on the sofa, she delivered it into the keeping of her attendant. “ My heart goes with it ; ” she said, as a tear swelled in her large dark eye ; “ but there can be no evil in the gift to one who, you assure me, will one day be my husband.”

“ Evil ! ” exclaimed the slave : “ who dreams of evil ? Even if you had given it to the Effendi with your own hand, where could evil exist ? Was he not chosen for you by the Bey your father ? and might he not have married you, if he had wished it, months ago ? Is he not now eager to do so ? You owe him at least a return for the grace that he has done you.”

“ Nay, chide me not, Ziba ; ” smiled her mistress, whom the energy of the attendant had served to reassure ; “ I am so happy that I cannot listen to any words save those of affection

and gentleness. How shall I repay you, dear, kind Ziba, for the interest that you have shewn in my happiness? My heart leaps as if it had but newly sprung into life; and I could almost chide the darkness that will last so many hours, before you can again see him!" and she buried her face among the cushions of the divan, and shed a flood of those passionate tears which scald the spirit from whence they spring, and destroy for ever the bloominess of its first perfect purity: tears wrung by the impulses of earth from the hitherto untouched soul; withering as they fall, and blighting in their hot flow the very sources of their being.

From this luxury of grief she was aroused by the rustling of leaves immediately outside the kiosque; it was not the sighing of the wind, for the night was calm and still, and not a breath bent the starry jasmine flowers, whose shadows were reflected on the marble floor. The ear of Ziba also caught the sound, but murmuring to herself "Here comes that Ibn Sheitan—that son of Satan, the Aga Baba—may his pillauf be made of green rice!" she quietly dropped her

head once more upon her knees, regardless of the interruption.

But the fair Delsaisè was not of the same opinion ; and she still continued to gaze through the open door, fearing she knew not what, and ashamed to confess her panic to her attendant, until the clear moonlight was shut out by the dark figure of a man, who stood on the threshold.

The maiden uttered a faint scream, and drew closer to the slave ; while the intruder, clearing the marble basin at a bound, flung himself at her feet, and, raising his eyes to her's, disclosed the countenance of Ildji Rezà !

CHAPTER VII.

THE ARAB STEED — *continued.*

I HAVE said that, ere the young men who were congregated at the great coffee-house separated for the night, they had drunk deep, and become excited with noise and clamour; but I have yet to tell you that when the son of Yezid once more found himself alone, his brain burning, and his brow fevered, he turned aside from the street leading to his father's house, and followed the same solitary path that the slave had selected some hours before. For a time he walked slowly, buried in thought, and indulging in a halcyon dream, rendered only the more brilliant by his partial exaltation; but as he pursued the subject, his step grew hurried and irregular, his breath came quick, and the blood

receded to his heart. Suddenly he stopped, hesitated, and then with the speed of desperation rushed down a narrow road leading to the palace-gardens of the Bey. When he had reached them, he walked for a short time to and fro beneath the wall, gazing upwards upon the overhanging trees; until, having selected that which best suited his purpose, he unwound his turban, and, fastening a heavy stone into the long scarf of which it was formed, flung it skilfully across a projecting bough, and thus securing his ascent, soon found himself upon the wall, looking down upon what to his excited imagination appeared to be the entrance of the Seventh Heaven!

All was indeed calm and beautiful in that sweet spot — the nightingale was pouring forth his love-song to the rose; and the moon was flooding the earth with silver; the flowers were paying back her light in fragrance; and the lotus blossoms were mirrored in the sparkling water, as they bent their heads beneath the diamond shower that fell upon them.

For a moment the heart of Ildji Rezà quailed within him. The stillness and purity of the

scene had schooled and sobered his wild and phrenzied feelings ; and he felt like a guilty soul hovering on the confines of Paradise. But this involuntary compunction endured not long : another rush of reckless emotion followed ; and he flung himself amid the branches of the cedar-tree, and descended into the garden.

Hastily he readjusted his turban ; and then he stole along under the shadow of the wall, in the direction of the palace ; when suddenly he came upon the kiosque of the fountain. His path being undetermined, he bent his steps thither ; and he had arrived nearly at the threshold, ere the possibility of its being tenanted suddenly occurred to him, when he hastily concealed himself among the shrubs by which it was surrounded ; until he distinctly distinguished two female figures within. In the next moment, he became satisfied that one of these was the slave Ziba ; and as he gazed upon the younger and fairer creature on the divan, his heart at once assured him that this could be none other than Delsaïsè, his promised bride. For a while he gazed entranced, drinking in her

pure moonlighted beauty ; until, no longer able to control the feelings which overwhelmed him, he rushed forward, and flung himself at her feet.

The exclamation which had risen to the lips of the young beauty died away, and the question arose in her mind—Had he heard her last words? Was he conscious that the tears which yet glistened in her eyes had been shed for him?—She glanced towards her attendant, but there was nothing to reassure her in the aspect of the paralyzed Ziba ; imprudent as she had been, the affectionate woman had never dreaded such a catastrophe as this !

For a while there was silence : the timid girl remained with averted head and heaving heart, incapable of uttering a sentence ; and the entranced and happy Ildji Rezà hesitated for the first few moments to break so exquisite a pause ; while Ziba, painfully aware that she was not altogether blameless in the affair, hid her burning brow upon the lap of her mistress, and sobbed aloud.

“ Fairest of the daughters of Peristan !” at

length whispered the enraptured lover, as he possessed himself of her small white hand ;
“ Houri, whom the Prophet has sent on earth to show man in what mould the shapes of Paradise are made—Star of the summer-night, before whose light the moon herself grows pale — Sul-tana, at whose feet the world might bow in homage, and yet fail to render thee thy due — Wilt thou not speak to me, that I may listen to the music of the bûlbûl ? Wilt thou not smile on me, that I may see the day dawn in the east, while to all beyond thine influence the earth is wrapped in darkness ? The lowliest of thy slaves is at thy feet—his life is in thy hands—he asks it of thee as a boon.”

He paused, and a smile, like the dawn to which he had likened it, stole over the fair features of the bewildered girl ; but she had not power to articulate a syllable.

“ Take that forfeit life ;” pursued the young man, conscious of his advantage ; “ that life which my entrance here has placed at your mercy. I shall yet be happy, for I shall die at your feet !”

“Asteferallah — Heaven forbid !” murmured the low soft voice.

“I shall live, then !” exclaimed Ildji Rezá, as he flung his arm about the shrinking girl, and drew her to his bosom ; “ My love—my soul—my bride !”

“ Eh, vah !” whispered Ziba, rousing herself from her paroxysm of terror : “ What is this, Effendim ? Are you a man, that you steal thus upon our privacy, and peril our lives ? Have we deserved this at your hands ?”

But Ildji Rezà heeded her not ; the fairest creature whom the earth ever held was in his arms—upon his heart — her long hair swept across his hand—her breath came to his cheek. She loved him !—his image alone occupied her — and how could he think of aught save her ?

Ere they parted, the dawn, veiled in her dusky mantle, was slowly ascending the sky ; and the awakening birds were twittering in the boughs, and shaking from the leaves, among which they had been nestled, the diamond-drops that they had worn throughout the night : the lovers had even talked of future meetings ; and

the fair cheek of the maiden had flushed crimson as she promised to hold the visit of her imprudent suitor a secret from all save Ziba. Often did they murmur a low farewell, and as often did Ildji Rezà delay yet another moment to press the delicate fingers of his mistress to his lips, and to hear her breathe out another parting word. But the slave, as she marked a few streaks spread across the sky, red as the banner of the Prophet, would brook no further venture; and, while the weeping and bewildered girl waved her last adieu to a lover whose rashness had not only perilled his own life, but her's, Ziba hurried him to a point of the wall where a decayed buttress afforded a safe and easy mean of escape from the garden; and, as he failed not at the same moment to remark, secured to him as commodious a mode of ingress.

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CHAPTER VIII.

THE ARAB STEED—*continued.*

THE new moon sprang to the brow of night, and crowned it with a crescent of silver ; and the beautiful daughter of Kassim Bey, and the son of Yezid the Khawaji, sat hand in hand in the kiosque of the fountain, and looked upon its pale and feeble light. It grew larger, until it sailed like a bark formed of one vast diamond upon the wavy clouds of the calm star-lighted heavens—and still they gazed on it together : changed only in having felt their love brighten and increase like the orb on which they looked—still he was at her feet, and held her hand, and beguiled the hours of night with gentle words : and the innocent and unsuspecting girl loved the

growing light, for she knew not that to her it portended evil. And next it rose to its high place like a burning world, poised in mid-air, and ruddy with the flame which fed upon its heart; till, as it reached its throne of sapphire sprinkled with diamonds, it grew clearer and purer in its brightness, and flooded all the earth with silver. And the lovers were yet together—tracing its quivering light upon the leaves, and weaving sweet fancies worthy of such an hour.

But the mahâk* came at last — and, as the young man watched the outline of the fair orb diminish, he suddenly remembered his vow, and quiet departed from him — the fair cheek of his beloved looked livid in the clear light, and a sadness seemed to dwell in her deep eyes. He remembered his vow, and his spirit melted within him. On that night he tore himself from his beautiful mistress with agony in his soul. There might yet be time to save her—he bounded along the garden path—he clombe the wall like a cha-mois—he looked neither to the right nor the left to mark if he were observed, but ran madly down

* Decline of the moon.

the road in the direction of the city ; conscious, even amid his anguish, that the shout of detection followed at his heels.

Like a hunted animal, he doubled upon his pursuers ; he crouched along under the shadows of the buildings—he rushed like a maniac across the open spaces which intervened upon his path. And still he flew on in the direction of the Meidan, until, in the broad moonlight immediately confronting him, he saw the Bectachy who had witnessed his unholy vow.

“Well found !” shouted the Dervish ; “a few bounds more, and you are saved—Haste, haste—the blood-hounds are at your heels !” Instinctively he obeyed ; and, grasping the hand that was extended to him, followed like a child. He heard the shouts, which had so lately grown with terrible rapidity upon his ear, die away in the distance ; and then he flung himself down upon the earth in a paroxysm of agony ; and writhed like one in the death-spasm.

“And whither were you bound so fast, my son ?” asked the Dervish ; as Ildji Rezà, slowly recovering his self-possession, raised himself on his elbow, and glanced wildly round the tomb

into which his companion had dragged him :
“ What has the owl of affliction screamed into the hollow of your ears, to move you thus ? You struck the fiery hoof of speed on the stony path of flight, like one who escaped from the pestilence—what may this storm of passion signify ? ”

“ Father : ” gasped the fugitive : “ I am accursed—I have become an Ibn Sheitan—a son of Satan—touch me not with the hem of your garment : but pass on, and let me die.”

“ Ne oldou—what has happened ? ” again urged the Bectachy : “ when we last met, you seemed to soar above the power of your felech, and to have expanded the wings of pride in the akash* of happiness—Why do you now grovel in the dust of disappointment ? ”

“ Where is the traitor Ali ? ” asked the young man in reply ; “ where is the Toorkoman fiend who bought from me the strings of my heart, and the pulses of my being ? If you cannot bring me to him ; then once more I say—let me die.”

* Eastern Philosophers insist on a fifth element, which they designate *akash* ; and which they invest with perfect purity.

“ Pouff ! pouff ! — pshaw ! pshaw ! Young blood chills not so soon ;” retorted the Dervish ; “ talk not of the dues of Asrâel while you have the power to defraud him of them. Why do you despair ? Has your gallant steed foundered ? or has he spurned the bit ? Why seal the trouble of your heart with the signet of secrecy ? The physician who has not learnt the nature of the malady can never save the patient. Tell me your grief ; and who knows but I may find its cure. Have I not already saved you from the negro hounds who were yelping at your heels, attracted thither no doubt by some imprudence of your own ? Why then should you hesitate to confide in me ? ”

“ What can I say, oh ! father ? ” exclaimed Ildji Rezâ passionately : “ I have strewed the path of vanity with the pearls of happiness, and they have been trodden underfoot. Oh, that I could grasp the skirts of the future with the fingers of repentance : and that it were yet my fate to call Delsaïsè my own ! ”

“ Are these tears, these pangs, then for a woman ? ” asked the Bectachy scornfully : “ and is

it indeed the son of Yezid, who so lately laughed the sex to scorn, who now moistens the marble floor with the drops of unavailing and unmanly passion? Have you not the steed in your stable whom you coveted more than all the beauties of the Imperial harem? and do you play the sakal-siz for a puny girl?"

"You chide in vain, father;" said the young man, recovering his self-possession by a violent effort; "rather assist me to find the wretch who has cheated me into ruin—my vow must be cancelled, though I pave the floor of his tent with gold—Let him take back the horse, and restore to me my soul—and then let us part, never to breathe the same air again."

"You talk wildly, my son. Ali the Khawaji has left the city. You cannot now pluck the rings of obedience from the ears of destiny—You have sworn, and you must abide by your oath."

"And when? — when?" gasped out the victim.

The Dervish pointed to the moon; "The mahâk has commenced;" he said solemnly: "you remember the compact."

Ildji Rezà smote upon his brow with his clenched hand, and ground his teeth like a maniac.

“When will man learn his error !” murmured the Bectachy, communing with his own thoughts : ‘ Thus is it ever that the shallow cup of youth overflows with the froth of folly : and that time brings only repentance as its dowry.”

“Can you not save us both ?” urged the young man ; “ oh, father ! could you but imagine half her beauty, her gentleness, her truth, you would feel that such a fate must destroy her, as that which my own madness has drawn down—Do you ask gold ? I will pour into your lap the pure ore of Sumatra which is current over the whole earth. Do you love power ? I will be your slave, and make my laws of the desires of your lips—Your days shall flow like the sacred waters of Zimzim ;* and your nights shall be nights of peace. But save us, father, or we perish. Read the stars for us, and teach me how we may escape.”

“Son of Yezid :” replied the Dervish ; “ why

* A fountain near Mecca.

do you thus sit down in the sepulchre of sorrow, and heap ashes upon your own head, when you should arouse the man within you, and shake off the woman-weakness that bows your spirit. Love is the very moon of madness, laughing amid the darkness over the terrors of its power ; a ghoul, whose food is the heart of its victim, and whose wine is its tears ; whose bonds are the chains of folly, and whose music is the howling of those who wear them. Earth is full of its bitterness ; and the very houris who have dared its sway, have bowed beneath the curse ; joy dwells not with them even in the paradise of the faithful, and its flowery paths are strown for them with burning sand. Up then, son of Yezid, and fling off this diadem of serpents, which you have woven about your brow."

"Dervish, you preach in vain ;" said the mournful Ildji Rezà ; "help me if you can — to chide me is useless — he who has once looked on the light cannot dwell in darkness with a merry heart."

"Ne apalum—what can I do, my son ?" asked the Bectachy ; "Listen to me ; the mahâk has

but commenced ; you have yet time for reflection. But beware of repeating the folly of to-night. You have been seen and pursued : and, had I not been upon your path, to guide the foot of flight into the way of safety, you would ere now have been sacrificed to the offended honour of the Bey. Be thankful therefore for your escape—*La illaha illallah*—there is but one Allah ! and you are yet in a whole skin. Rest quietly here for to-night. You are safe under the shadow of a holy name ; and you will not be the first sinner who has owed life and limb to the same protection. Here is food :” and he produced from beneath his *khirkheh* a handful of dates and a flap of bread :—“and here :” and as he spoke he dislodged a stone within the tomb, and drew forth a small skin filled with liquid : “here is wine — wine from Cyprus — as sweet and almost as thick as honey. — You look amazed, young man, but you have yet much to learn, even in the good city of Damascus. And now, eat and refresh yourself ; while I go forth and strive to learn whether you were recognized in your flight. If the *Ibn Sheitan*—

the sons of Satan—who pursued you, know no more than that they gave chase to a man, without suspecting his identity, then may you go boldly to the house of your father, and recommence your career of folly ; but if the cry was raised at the heels of the son of Yezid, you must gather up the skirts of speed, and pass the city walls while there is yet time. Farewell then for a while. When you have eaten and drank, you can replace the skin in its hiding-place ; and should I tarry on my mission, you must lay your head on the pillow of patience, and sleep or dream till my return.”

And, without awaiting further parley, the Dervish strode out of the tomb.

CHAPTER IX.

THE ARAB STEED—*continued.*

Ildji Rezà sat for a time with his head bowed upon his clasped hands, like a figure hewn in stone ; but after a while the faint sickness of exhaustion stole upon him, and he lifted the wine-skin to his lips, and drained a deep draught. Again and again he raised it ; and at length sleep stole upon him, and, stretching himself along behind one of the pillars which supported the dome of the building, he was soon buried in slumber.

How long he might have slept he knew not, when he was suddenly aroused by a hoarse peal of laughter immediately in his vicinity ; and, raising himself gently on his elbow, he discovered

that the night was spent ; and that, to use the figurative expression of a Persian poet, “ morning, in her mantle of dun edged with saffron, was, like a shepherdess of the plains, driving her fair flock of stars before her to the shade.”

The chilly dawn was peering into the building ; and as his eye became familiarised with the faint light, Ildji Rezà discovered that he had slept in company with the very outcasts of the city. There were two filthy hadjis, covered with rags, and loud with ribaldry : a couple of those convenient wayfarers who receive the wages of wealthy indolence, and save at once their own souls and those of their employers ; while they drive a lucrative trade by vending to the home-staying devotees shreds of rag, morsels of painted glass, and splinters of marble, collected at the Prophet’s Tomb. It being part of the system of these money-making pilgrims to enhance in the eyes of their patrons the fatigues and difficulties of their undertaking, they are always careful to appear before them both ragged and filthy ; and those who now attracted the

attention of Ildji Rezà were masters of their trade.

It was from the throat of one of these hadjis that the laugh had proceeded which roused the young man from his slumber ; and it had scarcely died away when a howl, deep, prolonged, and fierce, as though it had been uttered by a wild beast in the recesses of the desert, formed its hideous answer ; and as the son of Yezid grasped his handjar, and bent forward to learn its cause, he saw, crouching near the base of a pillar, a miserable wretch whose elf-locks fell over his lank and haggard countenance, and whose grizzled beard, dank with the night dew, and matted into thick ropes from neglect, hung to his waist ; his legs were bare from the knees, and covered with scars, as though his path through life had been among briars ; his raiment was scarce, and coarse, and worn ; and his long thin fingers were clasped in the mass of hair that hung over his wild fierce eyes, dragging it aside, as he glared upon a santou, or professional saint, who was squatted on an old rug beside him.

“Peace! father of asses!” said the elder hadji, shaking his clasped hand at the wretched maniac; “this is what thy vain folly has done for thee. Do you remember this howling idiot, Hadji Latif?” he asked of his companion: “there were none like him at the Tekiè of Scutari, when he first joined the brotherhood; but his zeal was stronger than his head; and though, as you may see by his scarred limbs and the seams upon his chest, he tried to keep it cool by blood-letting, it grew too hot for him at last——”

“It burns! it burns!” howled the miserable maniac, catching a glimpse of the hadji’s meaning; “La illaha illallah!” and as the words passed his lips, he fell flat upon the earth, with closed eyes and rigid limbs.

It was a spectacle of horror; and springing to his feet, Ildji Rezà bounded across the floor, and rushed through the portal of the tomb.

“A spy! a spy!” shouted the santou; “Let us away, my friends, or we shall have the city-guard upon us.”

The hadjis appeared to consider the advice

seasonable, for, tightening their girdles, and replacing their turbans with all speed, they left the building; being probably too well acquainted with the tender mercies of the Cadi of Damascus, to be desirous of placing either their feet or their throats at his disposal.

Ildji Rezà stood for a while in the chill morning air, panting for breath, and sick at heart, ere he remembered the wretched maniac in the tomb; when, shaking off the disgust that had grown on him, he slowly retraced his steps, and found the miserable man still lying extended on the marble floor like a corpse; his livid lips parted, and drawn tightly back from his large and discoloured teeth: every limb inflexible and rigid, and his long wild locks scattered over the pavement.

To fling over him water from a fountain which was near at hand, and to force down his throat a draught of the wine which the Bectachy had left for his own use, was the work of a moment to Ildji Rezà; and, as the madman writhed and struggled with returning consciousness, he soothed him with words and accents of gentle-

ness, such as had probably not met the ears of the ill-fated man for years.

“Gel, gel, gardash mou — come, come, my brother ;” he said kindly ; “ rouse yourself, or I must leave you in your misery, for I look to be summoned ere long ;” and the maniac turned his deep hollow eyes upon him in wonder as he asked,

“ Who are you ? — Monker and Nakir have left me, the mist rolls back, and the blue sky once more floods my soul—Where am I ? This cannot be Paradise, for I have not trodden the Eternal Bridge ; and the earth on which I lie chills me as though I were pillowed on a serpent.”

“ You are safe, quite safe ;” was the reply ; “ Sit up, lean on me, and swallow some of this cordial ; here are none to harm you.”

“ Harm me !” echoed the maniac, as he drained a deep draught of the refreshing wine of Cyprus ; “ my day of fear is past ;” and he clasped his long bony hands together, and his head drooped upon his breast as he murmured ; “ By sea and by land—by storm and by calm—

in the crowded city — on the wide waste of waters — above me, beneath me, about me on every side—they are ever there !—ever !—And she, my own one, my beloved Comladeve,* she for whom I bore all, she alone is absent—”

The low despairing tone of the Dervish struck to the heart of Ildji Rezà : he knew that it was the mere wailing of a madman ; but he felt, as he listened, that it must have been a biting misery which had shattered the intellect of the wretched man beside him ; and again he soothed, encouraged, and condoled, until his accents melted the spirit of the stricken one, and he wept tears in which there was no bitterness.

Suddenly he grasped the arm of the young man, and said eagerly : “ I know not what you have given me — I care not — but, though I am mad — mad — with a bursting pulse and a burning brain, I can thank you — and you shall hear all — *all* ! — I have not told the tale for years — I never thought to tell it again — but a sudden strength is come upon me ; and, ere I die, I will clear my breast of the frightful secret. Allah

* Water-lily.

kerim ! the vulture that gnaws my heart will soon miss its meal — the worm that has coiled itself in the cells of my brain will ere long unwreath its folds — ” And flinging his arms frantically in the air, he yelled out like a wounded animal, ere, by another transition of feeling, he cowered closer into the corner of the building, and in a rapid voice commenced his wild dream of the past.

CHAPTER X.

THE ARAB STEED—*continued.*

“ I KNOW not what crime I had committed ; I am ignorant if I was even accused of any ; but at midnight men stood beside my bed, and around it ; and my narrow chamber was filled with dusky forms, seen dimly athwart the darkness. Shapes of fear they were ; armed, and strong, and tall in the shadow ; and their heavy weapons struck discordantly and harshly on the marble floor as they moved silently about the chamber.

“ I strove to speak, but I could not ; Allah knows the terror which froze up my soul ! my tongue seemed parched, and clave to my fevered palate : fear had paralyzed my energies, and I could not move a limb.

“ I had little time to struggle with the dread that pressed upon my spirits ; a strong grasp raised me from my mat, and busy hands were soon folding my garments round me. They put my turban on my head, and fastened it beneath my chin with the chain which had sustained my dagger ; my arms were pinioned tightly behind my back, and secured by my own costly shawl—that shawl which I had bound in pride about me when I last beheld Comladeve, the peri of my spirit. What a vision did that memory conjure up ! I was about to be borne I knew not whither ; the hour would come when she would look for me again ; when she would have renewed the henna on her delicate hands, and scattered perfumes in her hair ; when she would listen near her latticed casement for my coming step, and hear only the breath of the evening wind sighing over the roses and the lotus-flowers ; her zebec would be silent, and her heart heavy ; for her loved one might not stand beneath her window in the starlight, nor look with her upon the moon.

“ These thoughts swept hurriedly over my

soul like the winged steed of Mahomet through a stormy sky. I struggled, but the effort came too late — I was lifted from the earth ; a coarse beneesh was folded round me, and I was flung rudely across a war-horse guided by a strong hand. Away we flew like the wind ! and, shrouded as I was, I distinguished the hoof-clang of many steeds, and the hoarse tones of their riders, urging them to yet greater speed.

“ On, on, we sped ; and, as I lay panting across the animal which bore me, the coarse covering pressed rudely upon my mouth and nostrils, and I sickened for air. For a while I became senseless, and when at length I again breathed freely, the wind of an autumnal evening was fanning my brow like the wing of a peri. I thought that I had wakened in Paradise ; and I hastily looked up to meet the dark eyes which were to welcome me to the everlasting bowers.

“ I gave but one glance, ere I again closed my aching lids : I was surrounded by dark forms ; they pressed closely about me ; and a crowd of turbaned heads were turned towards me, as if awaiting my restoration to consciousness. A

deep murmur ran through the throng as I looked up; again a strong hand lifted me from the earth, and I involuntarily gazed once more around.

“ We were standing on the verge of a dark rock; and the wide sea, in all its might and its majesty, was beneath us. I gave one frenzied shriek—it was the voice of my agony, as I hung in air for an instant, in the grasp of that iron hand !

“ As the scream died away, a deep voice sounded in my ear—the words were seared into my heart—How often since that moment have I uttered them with the laugh of partial insanity, or the hollow tone of reckless despair, when none were near to listen :—

“ ‘ Be the sea thy home — the grave which it offers to others, it shall refuse to thee—for seven long years shalt thou float on, and on—Earth shall fly from thee; and the inhabitants of the earth shall reject thy fellowship—Thou shalt look on forms that thou hast loved, and hearken to tones which have been dear to thee—Thou shalt look and listen, and it shall avail thee nothing.’ ”

“A hoarse laugh from the assembled crowd followed closely on the awful words; and, ere the discordant mirth had wholly subsided, he who held me strode yet nearer to the edge of the dark rock. Instinctively I closed my eyes: a sickness as of death came over me; there was another yell of fiendish joy — another hellish mockery of mirth — a sudden fall — a loud plash — and I was floating like a corse upon the waters.——

“Oh! the agony of that moment! I writhed — I struggled — I strove to wrench away the bonds which bound my arms — But, at every heave of my tortured body, at every spasm of my fettered strength, I only sank deeper into the wave; and as I rose again exhausted and panting to the surface, I threw back the salt water from my mouth and nostrils in nauseous streams.

“As the breeze swept over me, I caught the breath of flowers, the scents of earth! But I heard also the clattering hoof-strokes of the demon train who had borne me to the coast rapidly returning to the city. My heart swelled

almost to bursting ; and, had not my brain been scorched, I could have wept. I looked up ; the gray twilight was deepening around me—Wretch as I was, this alone was wanting to complete my misery !

“ Night was gathering in the sky, the long, dark, fearful night ; and I turned my eyes despairingly on either side. In one direction the tall rock from which I had been hurled rose bleak and frowning, while the waters chafed and belowed at its base ; and the light spray fell back, far across the waves, like rain. As I gazed, distant and twinkling lights appeared in many a chasm, and I knew that they betokened the habitations of men. I could see in my mind’s eye the narrow hearth of the fisherman, peopled by his children and their mother ; and again I buffeted the waters, and felt half a maniac as I struggled with my bonds.

“ The night thickened around me, and the murky clouds gathered like the sable wings of the angel Asrael ; not a star was in the sky, and the moon looked not upon the earth, nor across the sea, where I lay like a log upon the waters.

The wind freshened ; and I felt that I was rapidly borne away from the land. There was a mightier heaving in the billows, and a deeper murmur from the depths of ocean ; while the sea-birds shrieked out as they dipped for an instant their ill-omened bosoms in the wave, and then pursued their way to their rocky resting-places till the morrow. Alas ! I had no resting-place ! I prayed to the Prophet that I might die ; but, from the depths of his amaranth bowers, he heard me not ; and I lived on.

“ And now a fresh agony grew upon me. The folds of my turban became weighty as the moisture penetrated even to my hair-roots ; and I was bowed back heavily into the waters.

“ Bashustun — on my head be it, Effendim ! You have never dreamt of hours so long as those of that dark weary night ; with its shrill winds, its angry sky, and its deep dreamy solitude. Ere morning dawned I had writhed so violently in my bonds that the blood gushed from my ears and nostrils, and trickled down my beard. I was weak and spiritless ; and at length I wept like a child. They were the first tears of my

manhood, and they were wrung from my heart in agony and bitterness.

“As the light broke, a huge sea swept over me ; and though but a moment before I had prayed for death, yet now I panted and struggled with the suffocating element, and felt almost joy when the mighty billow was overpast.

“The day came—the glorious day ! Wreaths of clouds, beautiful in their blended tints of gold and gray, floated in the east, like heralds of the rising sun. Again I heard the shrill shriek of the water-fowl, and saw the gleaming wings of the sea-gull and the cormorant as they flew over my head. Sounds of unearthly music rose from the ocean-cells, like the welcome of the water-gods to the daylight ; whispers swept along the wave as the breeze rippled it ; and the golden tints of the morning sky danced in brightness on the waters. Crowds of flying fish darted high into the air, and fell back one by one as the moisture dried upon their wings. Many a shark in pursuit of prey darted along so close beside me as to heave the very billow by which I was upborne, yet it saw me not. I was

plunged deep, deep into the waters by the heavy fin-stroke of the mighty whale as it passed me by; and the fairy nautilus hoisted its transparent sail, and guided its tiny bark fearlessly within my very grasp.

“Hunger came upon me, and thirst; and the sun, as it rose in the heavens, beat maddeningly upon my uncovered face. I had prayed for day-light: I had watched and panted for it throughout the long, long night, and it had come at length, only to bring with it an accession of misery, for I sickened beneath the fierce heat and the blinding light.

“During the darkness I had drifted far out to sea; the wilderness of waters was around me: not a vestige of man, nor of that earth which is his inheritance, was left to cheat me into hope. The spectral albatross clave the air with white and motionless wing, and cast its long, dark, solitary shadow far across the wave.

“Then came evening, with its softened light and its subdued breeze; and my aching eyes were cooled by its approach; though I shuddered as I remembered that night would follow in its train.

“ Well might I shudder with prophetic dread ; for *that* night taught me that I was never, during my ocean-pilgrimage, to close my eyes in sleep ! I spent it like the last ; at times I was furious, and struggled and shrieked in my despair ; and at others I lay bleeding, exhausted, and almost reckless, on my billowy bed.

“ Years passed over me thus, chequered only by an occasional accession of misery, by storm, and hurricane, and tempest. Famine and thirst were still gnawing at my heart, and yet I could not die——”

CHAPTER XI.

THE ARAB STEED—*continued.*

“MEN say that I am mad; and it may well be so—it was in truth a maddening thing to lie year after year in my helplessness, storm-worn, sleepless, hopeless—Inshallah! there is another world for the True Believer, where the tempest-breath and the billow will never come—”

“And did you still live on alone?” demanded Ildji Rezà, interested despite himself in the strange tale of the maniac; “Had you no companion in misery? no occupation to beguile the dreary days?”

“Companion!” echoed the Dervish, with a wild laugh: “What companion would you have given to me? not a mortal—no! no!—he could

have held no communion with me—I was no longer an inhabitant of earth, but a loathed and unnatural being, living a charmed life—breathing upon an element which would have brought death to my fellow-men—fore-doomed to years of unholy existence—where could I hope to find a companion? Occupation!” he pursued still more earnestly; “Can you not guess my occupation? I learnt to note the hours by the appearance of the sunbeams on the water, or the position of the stars; and I collected the ashes of madness, which, after smouldering for a time, at length burst into a flame, and seared my brain.

“At times I lay quietly upon the surface of the ocean, and, fixing my eye upon a particular wave afar off, I watched its progress, and laughed long and loudly when at length it broke over me; and at others I shrieked an echo to the shrill cry of the sea-fowl, and felt a cunning exultation as I found how fully I had caught the discordant note; and heard the bird, mocked into a belief that it was the call of one of his own species, answer in his turn.

“But not always did I thus sport with my unhallowed wretchedness ; these were my hours of revel, and the startled spirit soon shrank back into itself—into its idiot vanity or its maddening despair !

“How often, during these miserable years, did I look on land : aye, even watched the fisherman while he drew his nets ; and caught the sound of laughter as it came shrilly along the waves ;—then, even although I felt the impotence of my efforts, I again strove to burst my bonds—panted—yelled in the agony of my helplessness, as I sank into deep water ; and writhed like a baited animal when I once more rose to the surface.

“All day I have floated past the land ; at times dashed furiously against projecting points of rock, and then cast back, maimed and bleeding, on the retiring breakers ; at others gliding slowly and smoothly along a smiling shore ; breathing the breath of flowers, cooled by the long shadows of stately trees, listening to the lowing of cattle, the song of birds, the sounds of

music, the voice of children — unseen, unheard, unpitied !

“ Thus sped my days : my nights brought no mental rest, for sleep was denied to me—Effendim, Min Allah — Heaven forbid !—that you should ever know how the brain grows crazed under the unwinking watchfulness of years !—the long, long wakefulness which knows no rest—the vigil that is unbroken ! And yet I longed for night ; for its darkness, weary and withering as it was, offered me at least a respite from the tedious monotony of the ocean and the burning fury of the sun. Sometimes, too, the pale moon rode high in heaven, and the sea gleamed like a sheet of molten silver, while I lay there, the only dark speck to mar the glory of the scene.

“ On such nights I was ever sad and resigned to my destiny ; I did not struggle—I did not shriek — I lay calmly, and wept like an infant ; or, after gazing awhile on the fair moon, I fixed on a bright star above my head, and fancied a world of happiness for Comladeve and myself in such a sphere of light ; and, as I gazed, the

hour of my soul would stand upon the vapour that swept across the moon; and point to the star on which I loved to look; and lo! it changed; and I saw the diamond key that opens the portal of the Prophet's paradise; while she beckoned me to a death of blessedness which I could not die! That vision brought madness with it—and then I held discourse with the sky, and with the sea, and again played the maniac.

“One evening, after a day of fierce heat, as I lay inhaling with avidity the cool breeze which swept along the wave, and feathered it with its refreshing breath, a distant object caught my eye, and I gazed upon it with delirious joy! Nearer it came in its pride: the dark mass assumed a form: it was — it *was* a ship! Ay! on she came, with her sails set, and her bowsprit bending at intervals even into the very ripple as the fresh breeze sped her on. I could see her tall masts, her white canvass, her complicated cordage; and, more than all, I could see many of her crew — men! my fellow men! my brothers!

“They came not from my own land, for their

unturbaned heads were bare, and the wind played among their long and curling locks — they were not of my own faith, for the Christian symbol streamed from the mast of the stately ship — but what cared I for this? They would save me; I should once more be restored to the world, to Comladeve, and to myself. Can you not believe that my joy was maddening?

“One among them stood like the spirit of the huge ship; and looked and spoke with the glance and the tone of pride. In the intervals of my struggles and of my cries, I watched him narrowly; once I thought that he pointed towards me, and my heart leaped with transport; but he turned suddenly away, and I saw him no more. Still, however, the full and lordly voice met my ear—alas! had I known the import of the words it uttered, the pealing of the midnight thunder had been more welcome.

“As I strained my eyes to look on the gallant ship, her sails shivered for an instant in the wind; I heard the myriad ropes beat heavily against the deck, as if cast down suddenly from many hands; and, ere I could draw another breath,

the vast canvass once more opened to the breeze ; and away flew the swift vessel like a mighty bird, and left me writhing and wretched — an alien, and an outcast !

“ How I watched that ship as she receded ! The figures on her deck became less and less perceptible, and soon totally disappeared ; ere long, masts, and sails, and cordage grew into one confused but wondrous mass ; and, finally, she dwindled to a mere speck upon the ocean.

“ Yet still I watched her — Allah ! how my eyes grew to that fading object as it slowly melted into thin air in the distance ! I hoped no longer ; but I had looked on *men*, and listened to the human voice ; and when even the dark speck utterly disappeared in the horizon, I buffeted the waves anew, and exhausted my strength in struggles with my unyielding bonds.

“ When the light came again, I searched around, as though I could yet look upon the glorious vision — but I saw it no more. I lived upon the memory of that ship for months. I could have described her, as though she had been still before my eyes. I remembered every look

and gesture of the proud spirit who governed her. I saw once more the graceful bound with which, after the temporary check, she again darted on her way — it was inscribed upon my heart and in my brain !”

The maniac paused ; and, grasping his broad forehead with his bony hands, seemed as though he sought to still the pang his vision had called up ; while Ildji Rezà sat beside him, marvelling how great a share memory could claim of a narrative in which madness was blent with suffering. Wild as it was, there was yet a connecting principle in the tale to which he had been listening, that seemed too mighty an effort for a mind shattered like that of the wretched object on whom he looked ; and the young man remembered that, ere the lamp of life is extinguished, its flame sometimes lights up for a short period the long-vacated sepulchre of the brain ; and thus he remained silently beside the Dervish, awaiting, with the reverence which is ever paid to madness by his countrymen, the termination of a recital which was evidently exhausting the strength of the narrator.

“Ekhi kateti—there is something; something that we neither see nor understand, Khawaji;” at length pursued the maniac; “upon our path, in the air we breathe, about, above, and around us—I was the prey of that power, be it what it may—I am so still—there are moments when I am mad—mad!—when the subtle enemy has drunk up the juices of my being, withered the marrow of my bones, and turned the stream of my blood to fire—but to-day the clasp is slackened from my heart—the demon sleeps—and I am again one of those to whom the world was given as a heritage. Yet I am not always so—and, least of all, when I was floating over that endless, endless sea. Do you dream that I saw none but pleasant scenes while I rode the wave, and mated with monsters? Ai, ai—woe is me! You are young, and the world has used you gently—you are strong, and your limbs have never writhed in bonds. You!” and he laughed the shrill mocking laugh of frenzy; “how can *you* guess at all I saw when the whirlwind and the tempest had done their work? Often, after a night of storm, did a pale bloated

corse pass close beside me ; the widely-opened eyes glaring, glazed, and ghastly, upon mine, soulless and sightless ; the lips parted as if in the death agony ; and the work of corruption begun. Horrible ! most horrible ! And yet, Wallah billah—by the Prophet ! this was but the natural effect of an element on which man might not live, save by demoniac means ; and I only loathed myself the more, as the foul corse was borne beyond my ken, that my lot was not even as that of him who had perished in the deep waters. *He*, at least, had buffeted the billows with unshackled limbs — had striven manfully with the fate which threatened him — and, when the bitter agony was overpast, had *died*. *I* had been bound ; had striven—struggled—suffocated—suffered all the pangs, the awfulness of dissolution, and yet lived. The tide-wave bore away its dead, and I envied the cold and loathsome corse !

“ But my cup of agony had not yet overflowed. The sun had set gloriously, and its golden beams still glowed and glistened on the ocean-wave, when again my ear was filled with

sounds which had long been strangers to it — sounds of mirth and music—and, like a thing of light, a gay bark swept gracefully along, with a gilded crescent at her mast. Yes — she came from my own land ! She came to bring me life and happiness ! There were revellers on the deck of that fair ship ; her silken sails were looped with flowers ; and silver vases, filled with perfumed incense, were shedding their costly breath upon the air ; I heard the shrill tones of the fife, the ringing notes of the zebec, and the clangour of the martial cymbal — for a while I spoke not—stirred not—my gaze was riveted on one bright form, which moved like a spirit of beauty among the revellers. Misery, madness, famine, had failed to blot *that* image from the records of my brain — I gazed like one who would exhaust himself in a long, last look, for I *felt* that it was Comladeve — she whom I had loved, whom I had almost won. Yes, *she* was *there* ! Her long hair was floating to the breeze ; her eyes were flashing like meteors ; her white arms were bare, and gleamed like sea-foam ; she was dancing on that vessel's deck, to the sound of the clashing cymbals !

“ Now, indeed, I writhed and struggled to free my limbs from the bonds which fettered them ; with the violence of my frantic efforts, I sank deep into the waters, and the waves closed above my head ; but it was only for a while ; and ere long I rose again, panting and suffocating, to the surface. As my breath returned, I strove to speak, to utter the name of my beloved, to call on Comladeve to succour and to save me ; but I gave voice only to a shrill scream, like those of the aquatic fowl whose cries I had mocked in my madness—speech had departed from me !

“ Vain were it for me to tell you all — Allah kerim — Allah is merciful — I was close beside the vessel, and they saw me not. I shrieked aloud in my agony, but they did not heed me. As the bark swept along, the tide carried me forward in its wake ; and when the moon rose, and the breeze freshened, I saw Comladeve lean pensively over the vessel’s side ; and, as she raised her eye to heaven, a tear fell from it—She stood not long alone ; a tall figure approached her ; a jewelled crescent glittered in his turban, and

there were gems in the hilt of the handjar in his girdle. As he reached her side, he murmured a few words in her ear ; he breathed them softly and fondly, but *I* heard them, whispered though they were ! In an instant his arm encircled her, and her head rested tenderly upon his shoulder — again he spoke, and, as the voice ceased, he looked up. Allah ! needed there this ? Was I not yet a wretch ? It was my brother ! that brother whom I had loved even as my own soul — *he* was beside my betrothed bride — *his* arm was twined around her waist — *his* voice murmured the words of passion — and I — I was near them — borne on the same ocean — breathed on by the same wind — lighted by the same moon — and they heeded, they heard me not.”

CHAPTER XII.

THE ARAB STEED — *continued.*

“ALLAH esmarladek — Allah have you in his holy keeping;” murmured Ildji Rezà, carried away, in spite of his reason, by the phrenzied energy of the Dervish; “This was indeed a grief.”

“But I survived even that —” laughed out the maniac; “and a new trouble grew upon me as I looked upon the lovers — I felt that mysterious sighing steal along the surface of the sea, which I had learnt to be the wailing of the water-gods over the coming ruin of the tempest-wrath; murmurs arose from the ocean-depths, the awakening of the storm-breath among the billows; the huge porpoises rolled over uneasily;

and the hungry sharks congregated round the goodly ship. Too well I knew these signs — they foreboded death — death, Khawaji ; the sickening, struggling death of the angry billow and the shrieking wind — I knew them all, for I had watched them for years, and they had never failed !

“ For myself I feared not — what could I fear ? They did not even promise me the death for which I prayed ; but for *her* — for Comladeve — for my soul’s idol — the water-lily over which the tide of sorrow never should have passed — for her I trembled with a dread for which the pangs of death had been a rich exchange ; and I yelled forth in my terror sounds of fearful warning. *She* heard them, and started convulsively. Like the blossom of the nirgis* bent she over the murmuring billows ; but not as she was wont to look when she listened to my voice, looked she at that moment. Gardash — brother — have you ever gazed into the eye of a peri who had folded the wings of her affection upon your bosom, and forsaken the flowery paths

* Narcissus.

of pleasure for the shady home of peace? Ha ! ha ! she looked, down, down, deep into the heaving sea — not with love — not with tenderness — not with trust — it was wild, maddening, phrensied terror that gave a fierce light to her eye, and threw a shadow over her pale brow : anxiously she searched among the billows for the fearful creature which had uttered a sound so dread ; but though her gaze seemed fixed on my very brow, she saw me not ; and, after a while, she again raised her bright looks to the evening sky.

“ *She* looked calmly on an horizon which to me was fraught with terrible warning ; dark clouds were flitting rapidly over the face of the heavens, and congregating in one dense mass, so black and heavy that it seemed to oppress my breathing ; the moon had risen, not in beauty, but red as blood ; while the lower fringes of the huge black cloud caught the reflection, and flung back far upon the waves their ensanguined shadow. At intervals, a fiery vapour played in fearful light round the gilded crescent at the mast of the doomed ship, and ran along it from point to

point — then came a deep hollow peal, which was commenced by the dark cloud, and echoed from every cave of ocean ; and again the deep waters swelled and heaved in their might, like the fettered limbs of a giant ; though the surface of the sea was yet calm, and the vessel rode as smoothly as though it had been gliding over the bosom of a lake.

“ But the storm came at length : a sudden flash struck on the crescent once more, and ran down the mast, clasping it round and round like a fiery girdle, cast by some avenging spirit from his loins — the huge cloud parted in twain—and the storm-god howled forth his summons to the tempest ! Instantly was it answered—the giant billows burst their bonds at once, and rose high into the air, crowned with foam.

“ Allah ! ’tis a rare sight to see the fury of the waves when they are lashed to madness by the storm-wind — when the surf flies high against the heavens, as though it mocked the vapours drifting over head — and the sea opens wide its yawning sepulchres, and gapes for the dead who are so soon to fill them ! But when

these are the young, the beautiful, the beloved — the treasured of your spirit, the cherished of your soul — Ha ! ha ! ha ! can you not feel the wild delirium, the bitter excitation, the maddening impulse of the conflict ?

“ I saw the light ship tossed like a ball against the sky, and then thrown back into the deep trough of the sea, like a stricken bird. Again I saw it raised on high until the holy crescent — the symbol of the Prophet — seemed to have grown into the dark, threatening, mysterious cloud, and I *felt* it again fall back ; for, as it came, a portion of its rent mast fell over the side, and struck me heavily as it touched the waves — down I sank — down — down — struggling with that mighty mass of ruin, until it again rose buoyantly to the surface, carrying me with it once more above the billows.

“ The ship and her proud crew had parted for ever — fragments of the wreck were riding on the foaming waters — I caught the breath of the scattered incense ; and flowers, and costly turbans floated past me, as I panted to regain my breath. What cared I for these gauds ?

They were of the world, and to me they were bosh — nothing. I thought only, looked only, for Comladeve — and I saw her ! Her dark hair floated like a cloud upon the wave which bore her up — her veil had escaped, and her beloved countenance was revealed in the moonlight — she was within my reach, and my arms were pinioned — I could not grasp her !

“ I uttered one cry in my agony ; and then, with frantic violence, I hurled myself against a portion of the wreck. *La illaha illallah* — there is but one Allah ! the effort, the struggle, the attempt to brave the death which had so long evaded me, brought partial freedom — I had burst my bonds ! For a moment I could but raise my arms high into the air, strike the palms of my spread hands forcibly together, and scream out a withering shriek of half-maddened delight — but soon came the remembrance of Comladeve — she was already carried far, far beyond my reach—but what was space ? labour ? time ? I was free !—free ! I cast my heavy turban from my head ; I parted the waves with a powerful stroke, and I gained rapidly upon my mistress—Nearer !

nearer! — I grasped her mantle — I drew her forcibly towards me — her pale cheek touched my hand — my breath was in her hair — one more effort — one more — and I should hold her to my heart — I, who for long years had been *alone* — alone, upon the waste of waters — one more effort, and she would be mine. Ajaib — wonderful! my Comladeve — the blossom of my soul! I made it — I strove to beat back a mighty billow, but it overwhelmed me — a huge fragment of the wreck passed over us, and I lost my hold — Comladeve was gone — gone for ever!”——

A wild shriek broke from the lips of the Dervish as he buried his head upon his knees, and cowered under the vision which his own distempered fancy had conjured up; while Ildji Rezà, excited beyond all power of forbearance, sprang to his feet, and hurriedly whispered: “Oghour ola — Heaven speed you — but tell me, what more? what more?”

“Bana bak — look at me:” said the wretched man; “can you not read the characters that the foul fiend burnt into my brow when he fled

howling before the fury of my despair? We met face to face—there—on the wild waves just subsiding after the tempest — we met, and struggled as demons only struggle—we wrestled together—but I shouted aloud the name of the Prophet; and as he cowered before me, he grasped my brain, and seared it with his fiery touch.

“After this I slept — ay, slept! I had dreams too—dreams of sunshine, and birds, and flowers, and cool green leaves, and gushing streams; and I wandered among them with Comladeve — but at length I awoke — awoke to find myself stretched along the earth! The sea was near me, but the tide did not touch me where I lay; bright shells were scattered along the strand, and the morning sun was glittering gaily on the waters. I beat the earth with my hand, and the blood flowed from it — I rose to my feet; the dark rocks heaved under my weight, and I staggered, and almost fell; *but I felt the earth!* I was once more like my fellow men—and I crawled along amid the high grass, and the painted flowers, till I found that which

I sought—it was not the houri of Paradise — it was not the rose-garden of Nishapor — it was a human being ; a creature of my own kind — a holy man — a santon of the desert. Mashallah ! how I yelled forth my joy when I saw him leaning upon his staff ; but he repulsed me with scorn and loathing — *he*—the first human being whom I had approached for years — Lahnet be Sheitan—Curse on the devil ! he struck me with his staff—spurned me with his foot—and turned away to tell his chaplet, while I fainted with famine.

“ Khawaji, my soul is sick. A light has flickered to-day about my brain which had been long put out. They say that I am holy, for I can pierce my side and my breast with sharp weapons, and torture my limbs with searing iron, and nipping bonds—they know not that the fire and the knife had done their work ere they folded the khirkheh of a Dervish about me, and gave me a place in the Tekiè. But all is nearly ended : the solid earth reels before my eyes, and the daylight grows dim and dusky—yet the film has passed from my soul — I have

been called Ibn Sallah—the Son of Prayer—none knew the curses which had withered me for years ! And to-day — now — come nearer to me, stranger though you be, to-day I *can* pray — the cry of my spirit is no longer vras, vras — kill, kill ! but I say to you, Allah esmarladek — Allah take you into his holy keeping, for the bitterness of life is almost past.”

“ Allah buyûk der — Allah is great !” said Ildji Rezà ; “ rouse yourself, and all will yet be well ; but if you fold your feet upon the carpet of despair, Monker and Nakir will soon seat themselves upon its border, and the shadow of their dark wings will obscure your soul.”

“ The mountain of El Caf is high, and encloses the world ;” replied the dying man ; “ but it cannot shut out Asraël the Destroyer. The bridge of Al Sirat is steep and narrow : the footing is but a hair’s breadth, yet it must be trodden by every True Believer who would reach Paradise. I am content—I do not die the howling maniac that I have lately lived ; I see my wretchedness, I feel my desolation—Kha-waji, pass on, and leave me ; Allah kerîm—

Allah is merciful ! your charity has reconciled me with my kind, and I shall go in peace."

"Nay, not so;" commenced Ildji Rezà, as a swift but stealthy step approached the tomb-house, and the Bectachy passed the threshold ; " chance has flung us together on the way-side of life, and I will not forsake you in your extremity : Min Allah—Heaven forbid !"

"Kim boo—who is that?" demanded the new comer hastily, as he stopped beside the son of Yezid ; " Wallah ! this is no time, Ildji Rezà, to play the nurse, when you should be under your father's roof, to answer to the voices of those who call you—Away then with the speed of the simorg ;* you are as yet unsuspected ; delay, and Bashustun—on my head be it, if some babbling fool do not whisper somewhat of the tale ere noon."

Ildji Rezà glanced towards the dying Dervish ; nature had exhausted herself in the effort which he had made to retrace the troubled vision of the past ; and life was ebbing fast.

* The roe.

Man's care could avail no longer; and with a deep-breathed "Aghour ola — Heaven speed you!" he turned away, and prepared to quit the tomb.

"Affiet ollah—much pleasure attend you:" smiled the Bectachy; "but forget not, young man, that I cannot be ever upon your path with a strong grasp and a skin of Cyprus wine. Be wary, therefore; and the Prophet be propitious to your prayers."

"And this poor sufferer?" said the son of Yezid, pointing towards the dying wretch, who had now flung himself along the cold pavement of the tomb: "you will not leave him in his misery?"

"Away — I will abide here while he needs me:" was the reply; "I shall not be long delayed."

And without further parley, Ildji Rezà walked forth into the clear calm air of morning, with the feeling of one who has awakened from a horrid dream.

The breath of the lemon trees was flooding the atmosphere with perfume, and the scented

dews were dropping from the branches beneath which he passed. The incense, offered up by Nature to the Eternal, was ascending on all sides ; and the glorious sun, the visible presence of the Deity, was calling into life all animate objects, gilding the leaves and the river-ripple, and shedding warmth, and brightness, and beauty over the whole creation.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE ARAB STEED—*continued*.

IN the city all was already astir. The lowing of the camels, and the barking of the watch-dogs of the Meidan ; the shouting of the slaves at the caravanseraïs, and the cry of the muezzin from the minaret of the Great Mosque ; all proclaimed that the sun had risen ; and many a pious Musselmaun was on his way towards the stately temple which was built by Heraclius, in honour of Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, but which it is now death to any Christian to enter.

Ildji Rezà walked swiftly through the streets ; and stepping over the two slaves who were yet lying sleeping in the outer hall of his father's

house, hastened to his own apartment. When he had closed the door, and flung himself down upon the heaped-up cushions which his attendants had prepared for his repose, he began to review more leisurely the events of the past night; and eager as he was once more to sun himself in the eyes of the beautiful Delsaïsè, he could not conceal from his own reason that all future attempts to invade the garden pavilion must prove abortive as well as perilous, when the vigilance of the Bey's household had been once aroused. Nor could he wholly divest himself of a feeling of extreme and anxious terror, as he remembered that suspicion might have attached itself to his fair and gentle mistress; and that although he had individually escaped the penalty of his rash adventure, it might be visited in tenfold severity upon her!

On—on—progressed thought; one dark memory linking itself to another, and forming a bitter chain of wretchedness. The Toorkoman—the steed—the mahâk—the deadly vow by which he was fettered—that vow from which there was no appeal, and no release—by which

Delsaïsè would be sacrificed ; and he himself die ten thousand deaths !

To look back upon the past was madness ; and with the natural buoyancy of youth, he turned after awhile to the future ; and began to devise new stratagems, which were each discarded in turn as unfeasible, or likely to be unproductive of success, until he at length resolved to trust to his felech ; and after having swallowed his coffee, to repair to the hammām, and take advantage of any good fortune or lucky chance that might betide him.

Having decided on this very simple mode of action, Ildji Rezà, after a short rest, rose from his couch, and having smoked a chibouque, hastened to the shop of the Armenian barber who was wont to operate upon the heads and chins of all the handsome youths of Damascus.

“ Khosh geldin, Effendim ;” said the operator, as Ildji Rezà entered the spacious paved apartment, surrounded by sofas, on which were congregated, even at this early hour, half a score of the gay young gallants of the city ; “ You are welcome, my master ; and the rather that I

last night received a packet of soap from Stamboul, and scented oils from Smyrna, which have not yet been rubbed upon the beard of any Effendi who frequents my shop. And sooth to say, Khawaji, you have need of them, for your chin is in a disarray which would go nigh to ruin my reputation if you were to walk through the tcharchi uncombed, as you have entered here. There is news, too, in the city—the harem of Kassim Bey has been attempted: some idle mascara (scaramouch) with better legs than wits, was seen to leap the wall of the women's gardens; and such screeching and screaming have not been heard under that roof since it was raised; as the Aga Baba himself told me, when he came in just at sunrise, in order that I might repair the ravages of the nocturnal chase in which he had been engaged——”

“And, as usual,” laughed out Latif Effendi, throwing forth a volume of smoke in which he was nearly enveloped: “the oldest and the ugliest of the women made the uproar, while the young ones ran to strive for a parting glimpse of the intruder.”

“ Hai, Hai — true, true — on my head be it :” said Ildji Rezà, forcing a mirth which he was far from feeling ; “ What is written, is written ; and the lovely are never the merciless. But who was the Delhibashi—the prince of madmen — who attempted so rash an exploit ?”

“ Some say it was Ashref the Numidian melon-merchant, who had become enamoured of the negress Giadilla, the dusky handmaiden of that queen-lily, the fair Delsaïsè, the Bey’s only child ;” again broke in the waggish Latif ; “ but others affirm that it was none other than our worthy host here, Apic Ouglou, who had dreamt a dream of the young Hanoum Effendi herself, while beating up the suds destined to lave the thick head of the Cadi ; (may his beard prosper !) and who——”

“ Me ? Asteferallah ! Me ? ” exclaimed the alarmed barber : “ Heaven forbid ! Is it for me to dream dreams of a Bey’s daughter, and to put my neck into the bowstring ? St. George, St. Nicholas, and St. Lawrence preserve me from such mad presumption !”

A peal of low chuckling laughter followed

close on the barber's deprecatory exclamation ; while, withdrawing his turban, Ildji Rezà seated himself, and ran his fingers complacently through his luxuriant and glossy beard.

“Guzel, pek guzel !” said the Armenian admiringly, as he also passed his hand over it ; “handsome, very handsome ! Bashustun — on my head be it, there are not half a dozen such beards as this in Damascus !”

“Say half a hundred, Apic, my friend, say half a hundred ;” smiled Latif Effendi ; “or you will lose your practice, seeing that we are all more or less touched by your decision ! for myself I care not ; I am beyond your malice—but Sarim the Bynbashi, Benezer the Saraf, and Mazzouk the Khoja of His Excellency Aslan Pasha, will one and all feel themselves aggrieved : as I hear that they have been wickedly called sakal-siz (no-beards) by the idle boys of the city : and that they have not rejoiced in the name.”

“Min Allah — Heaven forbid that I should anger the Effendis by a light word ;” said the mild Armenian ; “but even as the Yuzbashi (the captain of a hundred) loves to handle a

good weapon, so do I joy to comb out a fine beard."

As the barber spoke he threw around Ildji Rezà a fringed and embroidered napkin, and prepared his razors, by trying their temper on the palm of his hand; and while he was thus engaged, one of the itinerant perfume-merchants so common in the East, an old and withered woman, whose feeble steps were supported by a staff, stopped on the threshold, and invited the Effendis to examine her wares.

"No, no; see you not that their excellencies are engaged?" said the Armenian, motioning her away; "pass on; we need you not!"

"Sen ektiar der—you are the master;" replied the old crone quietly; "but surely these handsome gallants must want something to send to the young beauties whom they worship; and *you* will not spoil my market, I trust, Apic Oglou, you whom I have known for so many years, and to whom I have not been quite useless."

"Evallah—to be sure, to be sure:" hastily interposed the barber; "I owe you no ill-will,

Satira ; but to-day you will lose your time by loitering at my threshold."

"Satira!" exclaimed Ildji Rezà anxiously : "did you call her Satira ? Is she the worthy woman who has been thrice before the Cadi, and once bastinadoed, for introducing into the hidden chambers of the harem certain missives, where words of passion were inscribed with gold dust upon the leaves of roses ? Is she——"

"It is myself, Effendimou, my master;" said the old woman, nodding her veiled head, and turning her dim eyes towards the enquirer, as she advanced into the apartment, and deposited her essence-case on the lip of the marble fountain ; "It is myself, Khatoun, my darling : and, aged as I am, I care neither for the cadi nor the thong. What shall I show to the Beyzadeh ? I have dyes, and soaps, and unguents ; essences, and spices, and pastilles made of all the precious gums of Araby, and sparkling with gold-dust ; I have calams for tracing gentle words ; and all the love ballads of Hafiz, written in characters of many colours. I have amulets, and charms, and spells : boûquets of spices and garlic, to pre-

serve the young mother and her infant from the influence of the Evil Eye;* and——”

“Have you any charm to preserve us from the influence of the black and bright ones which flash upon us as we walk the bazār, from beneath the jealous yashmacs of our young beauties?” asked Latif: “for the Evil Eye, we of Damascus fear it not; and care not though——”

“Yavash, yavash—softly, softly, Effendim;” broke in the old woman; “Allah buyûk der—let us utter no words that we have not thrice turned in the palms of our hands, lest we wish to gather them up again when it is too late.”

And a murmur of “Taib! taib! well said, well said;” from the groups around the apartment, bore testimony that the feeling of defiance towards the Evil Eye was not so common in the good city of Damascus, as Latif Effendi, in his lightness of spirit, would fain have had it believed.

“But you ask if I have spells against bright

* It is a common custom in Turkey to send these bouquets as presents to the mothers of new-born infants, who have the most perfect faith in their efficacy.

eyes, Effendimou ? Min Allah—Heaven forbid ! How should I vend my wares, and to whom, if the peris of paradise were to fold their wings, and wither into afrits ? And how should I pass away my hours, were it not that I always carry home the merchandise that I sell, and deliver with the gift the ‘Oghour ola — the Allah speed you,’ of the giver ?”

“ Mashallah ! she speaks well ;” laughed her listeners.

“ And who see I there, on the sofa beyond ?” suddenly exclaimed the crone ; “ Can it really be my lord Aboudahab himself, the light of my eyes, and the hope of my soul ? Na to ne—there it is — I sought you all yesterday, agam, and found you not ; and to-day, when I looked no longer, thinking that my lord had left the city, I encounter you here, and may do mine errand.”

“ And what errand can Satira, the discreet perfume-merchant, have with the staid and pious Aboudahab ?” shouted one of the young men : “ Speak, Effendim, what can be the business of this veiled houri with you ?”

“ Allah bilir — Allah alone knows ;” said the

handsome young Yuzbashi of the Pasha's guard, who had been thus unceremoniously addressed; endeavouring, as he spoke, to assume an expression of unconcern, which, however, sat but awkwardly upon him: "Have you yet to learn that she is the mother of lies, and that she is as likely to hatch one for me as for any other of this goodly company? Mashallah, the wonder is neither a plague nor an earthquake."

"Bakalum—we shall see;" was the laughing rejoinder; "Say your errand boldly, Satira, my soul, for you find that the brave Captain defies you."

"Yok, yok—no, no:" persisted the old woman: "The Yuzbashi jests, for he has more discretion than to make the brow of a pretty hanoum wear the tint of the Prophet's banner. Bak, Effendim—see, sir;" she pursued, taking from her girdle a delicate roll of parchment, fastened with a lock of silky hair; "does this deserve no better welcome from the Yuzbashi Aboudahab than foul words, and the shame that is worse than words? Amān — mercy! but I looked for other coin when I ran the risk of

the lash, to convey this written violet to his own hands."

"Peace, peace, Satira, jaquir benum — my guardian angel;" exclaimed the young soldier, forgetting his confusion in his eagerness to obtain possession of the billet doux; and drawing forth at the same time his embroidered purse; "I will ransom the prize bravely: would that I could pay every word with a piece of gold, I should not grudge the price!"

And regardless of the merriment around him, the delighted lover thrust a handful of silver coins into the ready palm of the old crone; and hastened to detach the bright tress which bound up the scroll.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE ARAB STEED—*continued.*

Ildji Rezà had been no inattentive spectator of the scene; and when the decrepid messenger of love had transferred the money with a low chuckling laugh to the bag which she carried in her girdle, he disengaged himself from the hands of the Armenian, and proceeded to pour upon his beard the contents of one of the essence-bottles.

“Alhemdullilah—praises be to the Prophet!” muttered Satira, as she marked the reckless profusion of the son of Yezid: “what can he have to ask of me! ekhi kateti—there is something—What a Beyzadeh is this, who empties at one effort as much perfume as he must pay with a

broad piece of gold ! I shall have to run my old neck into the bowstring for this !”

Then, affecting not to remark his occupation, she turned towards one of the groups, and demanded : “ What can I do for your excellencies ? I have charms for all evils—beng and hashish * for the sleepless, perfumes for the luxurious, and enamelled boudakas † for the harem. Ne apalum—what can I do ?”

“ You may give *me* some beng, kizem, my daughter ;” said Mansoor Aga, the dull-witted Saraf of the Pashalik, as he flung down a piece of money ; “ ’tis the best charm I know against all the ills of life — better even than the sherbet of the Franks, for it leaves no head-ache behind it.”

“ Attar-gul for me, mother,” said Latif Efendi : “ unless, indeed, you have another love-missive to dispose of, and then I am willing to become a purchaser ; though, for a priestess of Aniran, ‡ methinks you are somewhat dull in your office.”

“ Ay, ay, love-tokens are the raz kallah —

* Narcotics.

† Pipe-bowls.

‡ Hymen.

the daily bread, of you gay young Effendis ; you never weary of them. But is it the handsome son of Beamrillah the jeweller, who asks *me* for such ware ? Ai, ai, there is no truth left within the barrier of El Caf !”

“ Wallah ! it is well said :” exclaimed Ildji Rezà, as he took up a packet of the powder of the sweet-scented violet, and a small box of the paste of the white lily, a delicate and costly preparation for the hands : “ and now, count up my debt, good mother, and let me cancel it.”

“ Allah moutèyemmin èilèyè agam—Allah grant that it be of good omen to you, my lord :” said the old woman, “ for it will cost you some coin. Bè hey ?—what is this ? a whole bottle of essence, of which every drop is worth——”

“ Listen, mother ;” said Ildji Rezà in a low voice ; “ I am not yet content with my purchase. I covet all your wares ; but I will not purchase them here. Meet me an hour hence in the great cemetery ; and meanwhile, here is what will supply you with a pillauf at your mid-day meal ;” and he flung into her basket a large gold coin which she greedily secured.

“ Said my lord one hour hence.”

“ I did.”

“ Pek ahi—it is well. I will be there.”

This short dialogue did not pass unobserved ; and the jests were numerous with which Ildji Rezà had to contend ere he quitted the shaving-room of the Armenian barber. But his heart was too deeply engaged for him to heed them ; and a gibe was yet upon the lips of the incorrigible Latif when he took leave of the laughing company, and bent his way towards the cemetery of the city.

There, among the tall cypresses, seated upon a grave, and leaning against the turban-crested headstone, he found the old woman already awaiting him. Her basket and essence-case were beside her, and she was quietly smoking her chibouque ; which, however, as soon as he approached, she hastily put away in order to rearrange her yashmac.

“ What is written, is written ;” she said as he stopped beside her ; “ It requires no calam to inscribe the truth on the surface of my understanding—Son of Yezid, you are in love ; and

you want me to peril life and limb in your cause."

"Min Allah — Heaven forbid ! I have not such desperate visions ;" exclaimed the young man gaily ; " You, Satira, khatoun, have trodden the harem-floor too often with a feather from the bul-bul's throat in your keeping, to run much risk of mischief in obliging me. You have been young in your time, mother, and perhaps beautiful ; and now——"

" And what now ?" hastily broke in the aged woman : " now, you would tell me that I am old, and wrinkled, and palsied ; and that such as I am are not numbered among the houri—I know it — I know it — I require no assurance that I am changed from the days when a smile from my lip made the crown of the loved one's head touch the cupola of heaven. Son of Yezid, were it not so, I should not be here and thus. Then the gold of Sumatra was on my neck, and the diamonds of the farthest East upon my brow—the cache-mires of Thibet bound a waist as slender as the cypress ; and the silks of Bithuania were folded about a form as graceful as that of the simorg—

veils of muslin, as fine as the gossamer that flits across the setting sun, shielded my face from the beam that would have marred its beauty—a face that looked like the moon at its full, in the season when the vines are leafless, and the stars hold their place about her silver throne, almost as radiant as herself—now, my yashmac is coarse and heavy, the gold and the gems have passed away; I smile, but it is in bitterness, for no fond eye hangs upon my looks: and I fold my cloak about as lone a heart as any in Damascus. Needed there words then, Effendim, from the gay and the handsome like yourself, to remind me of the change?”

“Nay, nay, you mistook me;” interposed Ildji Rezà, as the bitter smile passed from the lip of his companion; “I would have said that none better than yourself could feel and act for me. Let us waste no more words; I love Delsaïsè Hanoum, the daughter of Kassim Bey——”

“Love who?” exclaimed the essence-merchant; “Bè hèy—What’s this?—Would none other do for the son of Yezid the Merchant than

the only child of the fierce Kassim Bey ? Think, think, Effendim—you are too young and too gallant to offer your neck to the bowstring—I will dip my hand in no pillauf like this—Allah bilir—Allah alone knows how it might end.”

“ Have you then never heard that she was offered to me in marriage, and that I refused to bring a wife into my harem ? You look surprised, mother, but I tell you the truth. It matters not wherefore, but I have changed my humour, and now I would make her love me ere she enters the house of my father, that she may forget my past coldness.”

“ It will be no heavy task ;” said the old woman, as she gazed admiringly on the handsome youth ; “ you have but to gallop past her window, or to saunter beneath it, or, in short, to show yourself by any means in your power, and your object will be accomplished.”

“ I would do more ;” said Ildji Rezà ; “ I cannot be content with the mere eye-worship, that may be won by every handsome camal in the

city ; I would penetrate into the harem, and look upon her, and commune with her, and pour out my soul in passionate words, which should fall gently on her ear, as the leaves of the gum-cistus on the earth at twilight.”

“ And what furtherance seek you from me in this wild scheme ?” asked the old woman.

“ The loan of a disguise. Your cloak, your veil, and your essence-box. Go to the bazār, mother, and purchase for me toys and gauds such as may fix the eye of a young beauty ; teach me the quivering tone, the unsteady step, and the cant and craft of your calling—nay, no denial — I will pay you back in gold enough to enable you to smoke the chibouque of your age in peace.”

“ But should my share in this mad attempt be discovered——”

“ Korkma — fear not ;” said Ildji Rezà ; “ I will peril neither your neck nor my own beard. What is written, is written. I have resolved on this venture, and I will not be turned from my purpose.”

“ Allah buyûk der !” apostrophised the es-

sence-merchant ; “ the hair grows fast upon young heads, and some one must play the barber ! I am ready, Effendim ; I will trust both to your prudence and your generosity. And now, give me gold that I may hasten to the bazār to my friend Mazzouk, the honestest Merchant who ever dropped attar-gul into an ivory box ; for I will trade for you, Agam, as for myself. Deovletin istial—may your prosperity increase ! ” she added, as Ildji Rezà placed a well-filled purse in her ready hand : “ I always love to trade with such as you ; the women, aye, even the youngest, the handsomest, and the wealthiest, will cavil with me for a dinár, and blacken my face to obtain a bargain ; while the gallants of the city are as ready with their gold as with their jests. To-morrow then, Effendim, I will return and bring to you on this very spot all that you have asked of me.”

“ It is well — farewell then till to-morrow ; ” said the young man, as he turned away.

“ Delhibashi — Prince of Madmen ! ” muttered the old woman, while she followed him with her eyes : “ He shall pay me all, *all*, ere he

risks the venture; for, if Sheitan does not aid him, he will not escape in a whole skin from Kassim Bey."

CHAPTER XV.

THE ARAB STEED — *continued.*

SLOWLY, and absorbed in thought, Ildji Rezà quitted the cemetery, and turned his steps towards his father's house. The tapestry door of the Merchant's chamber was held aside by a slave, for Yezid was about to pass out ; and the young man met him on the threshold at a moment when he would gladly have avoided all notice. But this was not to be ; for, when a greeting had passed between them, Ildji Rezà found himself invited by a grave and silent gesture to follow the Khawaji back into the apartment whence he had but a moment before been about to depart ; and, as he entered, a feeling of impatient irrita-

tion grew upon him, on perceiving upon the sofa of Yezid a couple of carefully folded parcels, covered by finely-wrought bokshas or handkerchiefs, such as are only wrapped about the most valuable merchandise.

“ Wallah billah — by the Prophet !” muttered the young man beneath his breath ; “ here has my unhappy felech led me into a discussion on the relative value of muslins and tissues, when I would have shut myself into my chamber to arrange my plans for to-morrow. But patience, Ildji Rezà, thou must fulfil thy destiny.”

The philosophy of the son of Yezid seemed indeed about to be put to the test ; for the door of the apartment was scarcely closed behind them, and the Merchant had barely reached the centre of the floor, when he pointed to the packages on the sofa, and asked in a tone of bitterness and wounded pride : “ Ildji Rezà, do you see those bokshas ? ”

“ I do.”

“ Can you guess what they contain ? ”

“ Perhaps muslins from Hindostan ; perhaps

silks from Broussa ; or, it may be, jewels from ——”

“ They contain all of these ;” interposed Yezid hastily : “ and each the most costly of its kind — and yet — listen to me, Ildji Rezà — I swear that they are more loathsome in my sight than if they were the discarded rags of some filthy Jew. They were the bridal gifts of the son of Yezid to the daughter of Kassim Bey — from the relenting lover to the neglected mistress — and you see how they have sped. The profligate heir of the poor Khawaji is no longer a fitting suitor for the only child of the haughty Bey. You have played the fool so well, Ildji Rezà, that you have transferred the motley to me, and I shall be pointed at as I walk the city streets.”

“ Now, by the soul of the Prophet !” burst forth the young man.

“ Yavash, yavash — softly, softly ;” said the Merchant in the calm accent of concentrated passion ; “ anger is unavailing, and hot words were made for women. We are no longer held worthy to dip our spoon into the same tchorba

(soup) with a noble — we have put our beards into his hand, and we have no right to complain that he has plucked them out. You now know all, Ildji Rezà, and must henceforward be content to seek a wife among the merchants of the city.”

As Yezid ceased speaking, he clapped his hands, and a slave reappeared on the threshold with his slippers. Ildji Rezà was aware that the outward show of calmness which his father had maintained during their brief interview, was as deceitful as the stillness of a volcano ere the lava-flood bursts forth ; and he did not dare to detain him : while a rush of conflicting feelings rooted him for a time to the spot, and kept him motionless.

All was then over, as regarded his recognised marriage with the beautiful Delsaïsè — Should he win her by stratagem, he must fly with her to another land — and it might even be — and in that thought there was madness ! — that she had been accessory to his insulting dismissal — the novelty of his affection had worn away — the mystery of his love was about to be terminated by a

marriage sanctioned by her father, and her woman-fancy, thwarted in its full flow, had degenerated into disappointed indifference. But, no, no ; this could not, *could* not be ! He remembered a thousand whispered words which had pledged her to him in every change of fortune ; and he would not believe that her pride could play the traitor to her peace.

He would trust to her affection — he *must* trust to it, not only his happiness, but his life, or she was lost to him for ever ; for he felt assured that his disguise, carefully as it might be adjusted, would soon fail to insure his safety beneath the eyes of suspicion and inquiry.

But what cared Ildji Rezà for the risk ? What was life to him, if its best principle were wanting ? He was content to abide his fate ; and, for a while, he abandoned himself to happy dreams of the sweet existence, which far, far from Damascus, and from the frown of a proud father, he would lead with Delsaïsè — with the loved one, whom he would rescue from her cheerless thralldom to be the wife of his bosom, and the idol of his heart — but suddenly a dark shadow crossed

the mirror of his mind—he remembered the Toorkoman, and all was again despair and remorse !

Thus did Ildji Rezà pass the night : sometimes wrapped in visions which could have been realised only in the paradise of Mahomet ; and at others sunk in unavailing regret, and trembling apprehension. But the morrow came at length : and the young man, rousing himself by a violent effort, prepared to keep his adventurous appointment with the essence-merchant.

When he reached the spot where he had left Satira on the previous day, he found her already at her post ; but, as he approached, she moved silently on until she stood amid a cluster of thickly-planted trees, and beside a tomb of unusual size ; here she paused, and drawing from beneath her cloak a parcel of considerable bulk, she flung it at the feet of Ildji Rezà.

“ You are obeyed, my son : ” she said, as she deposited her essence-box on the ground beside her : “ and fear not, for though the garments be coarse and worn, they came not from the quarter where the khanzyr (hogs) of Jews nurse the

plague that it may scatter the True Believers before its loathsome breath. It is true that I have paid a heavier sum for them, than if I had purchased them of the dogs of Infidels; but I preferred the pillauf of safety to the pomegranate of gold, and heeded not the price. Bak agam — look, my lord;” she continued, as she unfolded the squalid raiment in which the hitherto fastidious Ildji Rezà was about, although not without a disgustful shudder, to envelope himself; “Here are an antery and schalwar which the Effendi, who sold them to me, valued at two purses, though, at length, by dint of cavil, I paid for them both with one — and here is a feridjhe (mantle) of green cloth — you will be for a time descended from our holy Prophet — see that your deeds do no dishonour to the alliance — it is somewhat short for you, of a truth; but these capital boots of yellow morocco (scarcely soiled, by the way, save that they have been slightly discoloured by the mud of the city streets) will render that inconvenience of little account. And now, seat yourself, that I may arrange your yashmac; the muslin is rent in

places, and it will require some skill to fold it to the best advantage. Pek ahi — very well !” she said exultingly, as she concealed the handsome face of the son of Yezid beneath the tattered veil of coarse white muslin ; “ But you must remember that your eyes are visible, and that no old merchant-pedlar suffers her glances to go roving far and wide, as your’s are wont to do ; drop your eyelids heavily over them, or you will be betrayed ere the Aga Baba has accepted your bribe, and suffered you to pass into the harem. Bear in mind too, that your feridjhe is something of the shortest ; lean, therefore, upon your staff, and bend your knees ; sink your head between your shoulders, and give a curve to your back ; the years which can be flung off at will, may be allowed to press hard for a few hours.”

Ildji Rezà listened in silence, for his heart was too full for idle colloquy ; and when he was fairly invested with his new character, and that his own garments were folded and delivered to the safe keeping of his garrulous companion, he flung to her a purse, which she deemed it expedient to secure without comment, and lifting the

essence-box from the earth, and seizing the staff which she held towards him, he took leave of the old woman ; and while she seated herself on the tomb, and prepared to recruit her exhausted energies with a chibouque, he quietly passed out of the cemetery.

Not an eye turned on him in enquiry as he traversed the city streets ; his disguise and his caution were alike perfect ; and he had gained a considerable portion of self-confidence when he at length paused at the harem-door of Kassim Bey.

Well did he know that on the result of the next few hours depended his future welfare—that on the sounding of this particular chord on the mysterious instrument of fate, hung the harmony or discord of his after-life ; and he resolved to meet it manfully.

Two sharp strokes with the head of his staff brought a negro slave to the threshold, who, holding the door carefully in his hand, uttered a quick and angry enquiry as to the identity of the stranger.

“ It is me, janum—my soul ; it is me ; ” replied

the imposter boldly ; “surely you have not forgotten me so soon, Effendim, in the fumes of my own gebeli — Bana bak — look at me, I am Satira the essence-merchant ; with a fresh cargo of perfumes for the fair Hanoums of the Bey’s harem, and a stock of the finest Salonica tobacco for my own friends. Open the door, agam, open the door, and let me pass in, for I am weary.”

“You must rest awhile in the hall, mother, until I summon the Aga Baba ;” said the slave ; “I am but newly arrived, and you are a stranger to me. You can unpack the tobacco while you wait.”

“Taib—well said :” retorted the visiter : “it is gebeli for a Pasha, and you shall taste of the best — and for my lord the Aga Baba (may his power increase !) is not my life and all that I have at his command ? for has he not ever turned the light of his countenance upon me, and brightened my soul ?”

The concluding portion of this rhapsody was uttered with great emphasis, for the wily Ildji Rezà had remarked the stealthy entrance of the

hideous Numidian at the lower end of the hall, whence he was listening to the conversation.

“The wife of Aslan Pasha has quarrelled with the chief of her harem-guard ;” pursued the speaker, affecting to lay bare his merchandise to the admiration of the slave by whom he had been admitted : “and she swore to me by the soul of the Prophet, that if her husband loved her, her enemy should never pass another Baïram in the palace of the Pashalik, where his duties are light, and his gains heavy ; and she is one who will keep her word. ‘But where shall we find another to supply his place in Damascus?’ she asked ; ‘one worthy to watch over the heaven-gifted beauties of Aslan Pasha’s harem?’ ‘Fear not, fairest of the daughters of Peristan :’ answered I boldly ; ‘the Prince of Aga Babas, the most renowned of negroes, is within the reach of your excellency’s summons—the inimitable Kafoor Effendi, the trusted friend of Kassim Bey.—’”

“Kim boo — who is that ?” growled a hoarse voice, sounding like the roar of a bear from amid the underwood of a forest, as the redoubt-

able Kafoor himself came forward, attempting to appear unconscious of the compliments which had just been lavished on him ; “ Who is that ? and what does she here ? ”

Ere Ildji Rezà could frame a reply, the Aga Baba had waddled across the hall, and stood beside him ; he was of immense size and height ; his head was disproportionably large, and flattened as though it had in his youth supported some overpowering weight : his eyes were large and bloodshot, and overhung by long and shaggy brows which met across his broad and bridgeless nose ; his nether lip hung low upon his chin ; and the belt which supported his scymetar was buried between two ridges of fat which girdled him with obesity.

But Ildji Rezà wasted no time on the external qualities of the Aga Baba ; as, making a low and respectful obeisance, he besought that his favour might overshadow him, and his smile bring him happiness.

“ Have I done ill, my lord ; ” he asked ; “ that before I subjected my wares to the eyes and fingers of half the city, I have brought them

here to pleasure you with their novelty? Has the chibouque of sweet savour ceased to please; or may I hope again to supply the boudaka of the far-farmed Kafoor Effendi from this fresh bag of the fragrant gebeli of Salonica? Have I angered my lord, or will he condescend to mix his sherbet from these delicate cakes of preserved sugar? Or to dip his fingers into this jar of tchalva, or his hand into this dish of kubeh?"* and the son of Yezid, moving between the Aga Baba and the attendant s.ave, so as quite to impede the view of the latter, extended towards the Numidian a china saucer, where, in the midst of the dainties he had mentioned, lay a purse of gold coins which were distinctly visible through the transparent muslin that contained them.

"And why not?" again growled the worthy guardian of Kassim Bey's harem, as he clutched with the same grasp the purse and the kubeh: "Is it because our own cooks are crafty, that there should be none other such in Damascus?"

* Baked force-meat, wrapped in vineleaves.

Min Allah — Allah forbid ! the food is good, mother, and well flavoured ; and if you desire to dispose of your wares to the ladies of the Bey, I will myself conduct you to the harem."

Ildji Rezà's breath came quick, for although his errand appeared to speed well, there was a keen malicious expression in the large unsightly eye of the Numidian which made his pulses quiver, and redoubled his caution.

"It is strange that I have forgotten your name, mother :" followed up the formidable Aga Baba, with still encreasing scrutiny of look and manner ; "for it would seem that you and I should be well acquainted."

"My lord surely jests with his slave ;" said Ildji Rezà hurriedly ; "for how should such as he remember poor Satira the essence-merchant, save by the excess of his condescension ?"

"Hai, hai—true, true ;" was the reply ; as a low chuckling laugh escaped the functionary ; "I should have remembered you, for I saw you bastinadoed in the bazār by the Wali's officer for carrying love-tokens into the harem of Nazif the Jeweller — Bashustun — on my head be it ! but

the cow's thong did its office generously that day, mother."

"And did my lord believe that I was guilty?" asked Ildji Rezà deprecatingly, as he slipped another purse into the palm of the Aga Baba; "could my lord think that I was such a cast-away?"

"Nay, nay; I said not that you had done the deed:" was the quick reply, as the hand of the Numidian was hastily plunged amid the folds of his girdle, and then drawn back empty: "That was the Wali's affair, not mine—but we waste time; and truly I am not sorry to see you here, mother; for the lady Delsaïsè, who has done nothing but weep for the last two days, may perhaps find amusement for a few moments in wasting the Bey's money on your toys and trumpery."

Little did the Numidian imagine the effect of his words upon the eager and impatient listener. Delsaïsè wept then! and he alone could dry her tears, for it was for him that they were shed. He would have rushed to her presence, have flung himself at her feet, and have poured out

his transport like a lava-flood before her ; but again the harsh voice of the Aga Baba fell upon his ear, and he felt the necessity of caution.

“ You spoke of the harem of the Pasha, mother ; and of some misunderstanding which had arisen between the chief of the guard and his fair mistress the Buyûk Hanoum — Are you sure of the fact ? ”

“ As sure as that there are stars in heaven during a summer night. Did not the beautiful Gulzara, the rose-garden of delight, tell me the tale with her own coral-tinted lips ? And did I not in return—— ”

“ Enough, enough, good mother ; I know the rest ; but think you that you have influence to procure the post for me ? If you can do it, you shall pass to and fro unquestioned : aye, even although you were the high priestess of Anirân herself. I desire to serve the Pasha : he is indolent and generous ; and so long as he can fold his feet upon the carpet of quiet, cares not who counts out the piastres of profit.”

“ My lord says well, and my face is blackened

before his wisdom:" replied Ildji Rezà : " so sure as I am an essence-merchant, shall Kafoor Effendi, if such be his pleasure, become the guardian of the Bey's harem."

" You will swear this ?"

" And why not ?"

" You will swear it by your father's beard ?"

" I will."

" Enough — we will talk further of this presently ; but you must not breathe a syllable of the compact under this roof."

" I shall be silent as the dead ; Evallah ! I have long learnt when to be mute, and when to trust myself with words."

" You are discreet and wise ;" said this pink of Aga Babas, as he preceded the impostor to the principal apartment of the harem : " Allah buyûk der — Allah is great, Fortune is not always overtaken by the swift ; some men gather her up under the roofs of their own dwellings, while others wander the streets, and find nothing."

" Ajaib !—wonderful !" ejaculated Ildji Rezà, as if in amazement at the wisdom of his companion.

“ Wherefore,” continued the Numidian with increased sententiousness ; “ look not for inordinate and exceeding profit in the vending of your wares ; rapaciousness is unseemly ; the Prophet favours the right-minded, and the just are always the happy.”

The son of Yezid listened, half wondering and half amused, to this tirade from the lips of an individual who had just received a bribe to betray his trust ; but chancing to glance around, he discovered that they were watched by a young slave, bound on some errand in the harem ; and he at once understood the plot of the comedy.

“ Haniah Delsäisê Hanoum — Where is the lady Delsäisè ?” inquired the Aga Baba, affecting suddenly to perceive the maiden. “ Here is Satira the essence-merchant, who would fain tempt her with toys and perfumes.”

“ Aferin — well done !” was the reply ; “ you are well met, mother ; for we have scarce a pastille left in the palace ; and the wife of 'Timsah the mir akhor (head-groom) is the mother of a fine boy, and we have no spell against the Evil Eye to offer her.”

“ Leave it all to me, kizem—my daughter :” returned Ildji Rezà, dreading lest the bright-eyed damsel should detain him ; “ leave it all to me ; prettier trinkets, choicer scents, or stronger spells I have never vended than those in my present stock.”

As he spoke, the Aga Baba put aside the fringed and embroidered screen which veiled the door of an apartment at the extremity of the inner hall or saloon in which they stood ; and, with a lowly prostration, Ildji Rezà paused at the threshold.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE ARAB STEED—*continued.*

THE low cushioned divan which stretched along three sides of the spacious room was of crimson velvet flowered with gold, and from the seat to the floor a rich fringe of the same costly material fell glittering in the light. The apartment was covered with a bright-coloured Persian carpet ; gilt cages, containing gaily plumed birds, were hung against the walls, and instruments of music were scattered about in every direction.

On one corner of the sofa sat the beautiful Delsaïsè ; she was as pale as a lotus under the moonbeams ; and about her waist she wore the gorgeous scarf which had been the love-gift of

Ildji Rezà. A cluster of tube-roses lay near her, but she appeared to have flung them aside in weariness of spirit. At her feet reclined the faithful Ziba, seeming scarcely less sorrowful than herself; and a pang smote on the heart of Ildji Rezà as he remarked the air of languid indifference with which his lovely mistress turned to note the entrance of a stranger; ever an event of interest in a Turkish harem.

“Here is a visitor, Effendim;” said the Aga Baba; “Satira the pedlar, who is come to ease you of your gold, should your humour serve.”

“She is welcome;” was the unmoved reply.

“May your days be many, and your beauty never decrease;” commenced the impostor in a less assured tone than he had yet spoken, for the spell of her loveliness was on him: “*deov-letin istiat*—may you increase in prosperity; and may every wind waft to your brow the tint of the lily, and the breath of the violet.”

The lady started as the voice met her ear, for, disguised though it was, it awoke an echo in her bosom, and a bright blush mantled upon

her cheek, as she bent forward to listen more freely.

“Are you pensive, queen of the peris? I have love-ballads wrought in threads of pure gold, on muslins fine enough to float upon the summer wind. Are you sick? I have perfumes which would recall the fainting spirit about to escape the boundary of El Caf. Have you been smitten by the Evil Eye — though that can scarcely be, when your cheek is all beauty, and your brow all light — I have charms, and spells, and amulets to overcome the visitation.”

“Give me those! give me those!” exclaimed the fair girl eagerly; “My heart is sad; and I would fain find a spell by which it may be lightened.”

“Heaven grant that it be of good omen to you!” said the disguised merchant, as he advanced to the sofa, and spread his wares upon the carpet: “For the Evil Eye, spices, and garlic, and beads, and crescents of bone avail much when properly prepared; but for a heavy heart there are other spells more simple, such as withered flowers, gathered when the sun of joy

had opened wide their petals, and preserved where no eye could see them fade. Bak, Effendim—See, lady ;” and Ildji Rezà held towards her a spray of withered jasmin, bound about with a long lock of jetty hair.

“ La illaha illallah—there is but one Allah !” murmured the beautiful daughter of the Bey, as she recognized her own offering to Ildji Rezà ; and at once, with the natural penetration of woman, felt assured of his secret : “ But how, good mother, can these faded blossoms lessen my grief ?”

“ By teaching you, Sultana, that all is not dark when a cloud comes upon the sky : that when it is night in one land, the sun is shining in another ; and that when the gloom is the most dense, the brightness is oftentimes at hand.”

The Lady Delsaisè hung eagerly upon his words ; and even Ziba was roused by a strange suspicion ; while the Aga Baba — lost in dreams of ambition, and ruling in idea the harem of Aslan Pasha with a rod of iron — forcing the women to buy his forbearance with bribes ; and wringing from the wretches who sought the favour and

protection of the Satrap and his satellites, even to their last dinar—the Aga Baba was altogether unconsciousness of the danger to which his cupidity had afforded such facilities.

“Nay, you need not retain the charm;” continued the son of Yezid, as, after gazing earnestly at the faded flowers, the agitated girl was about to deposit them on the cushion beside her: “You need only press them for a moment to your lips, and the spell will be complete.”

Delsaïsè obeyed, and the withered *jasmin* was then restored to its owner, who received it with as much fervour as though it had been a relique from the Prophet’s tomb.

“Here is another and a more powerful charm;” continued Ildji Rezà emphatically: “but it can only be wrought at midnight, beside a fountain, and under the shadow of tall and leafy trees.” And he fixed his eyes earnestly on the maiden, to learn if she had read his meaning.

“Pek ahi, dostoum — very well, my friend:” she replied with as much composure as she could assume; “But may I not bring a companion with me?”

“Not one;” said Ildji Rezà decisively; “You must sit beside the fountain with your face turned Mecca-ward, just where the shadows of the boughs are deepest; and dip this mirror three times into the pure water. At the third immersion loosen your hold, and your griefs will sink to the bottom of the basin with the anali: then cast over yourself a dark-coloured cloak, and remain an hour motionless. Do this, and when next I bask beneath the glory of your smile, it will be as bright as daybreak in the East.”

The fair Delsaïsè extended her hand to receive the prize, and, as he resigned it, the son of Yezid pointed to the frame-work in which it was set; and the delighted girl saw that it was written entirely over in a small and distinct character. Hastily laying it aside, she busied herself among the toys and perfumes; and having selected a few of the most costly, she flung a purse of gold into the box, for the eye of the Aga Baba chanced to be upon her; and bade Ziba carry them to her mother, while she selected a few trifles to distribute among her attendants.

Many a covert hint, and many a passionate pledge veiled in metaphor, passed between the happy lovers, ere Ildji Rezà obeyed the mandate of the Aga Baba, and prepared to quit the harem. He arranged his merchandise with a care which rendered the ceremony most wearisome to the Numidian; and, had it not been that the worthy functionary was yet expecting an offering of tobacco from the pedlar, the son of Yezid would assuredly have been ejected with more speed than courtesy. All was, however, at length replaced: the cases were closed, the bokshas folded, and having pressed the hem of the lady's garment to his lips, Ildji Rezà found himself compelled to depart.

But the magic mirror was in her hands — his image was yet in her heart — that very night, if she listened to his prayer, they would meet to part no more — to fly together — to be happy ! Ildji Rezà scarcely felt the earth on which he trod — his spirit floated in the pure akash — he was an altered man ; and he had stolen to the squalid hovel of Satira, and cast aside the rags in which he had been disguised, ere one memory of

the 'Toorkoman and his own rash oath had marred the brightness of his visions.

When he reached his father's house, he paid no visit to the harem, for he knew that the proud spirit of his mother must be stricken to the earth by the indignity which had been offered to her only and idolised son; but, passing quietly to his own apartment, he closed the door against all intruders, and spent the hours which must intervene until midnight, in endeavouring to picture to himself the result of his appeal to the Bey's daughter. Much did he trust to the love she bore him; but alas! as Ildji Rezà, in solitude, leisurely contemplated the extent of the sacrifice which, in their coming interview, he was about to require of her, he found himself less at ease, and by no means so confident of success as he had been when he first formed the project.

He had asked her to fly with him; to abandon her father's roof, to forego her mother's affection, and to quit her birthplace with all its associations of love and luxury, to share the fortunes of a wanderer, who must carve out his destiny in a

distant land and among strangers, with the edge of his weapon: and Ildji Rezà quailed, even in his solitude, when he remembered that this was not all! That, before he could secure to her the mere doubtful benefit of such an existence, a still more terrible trial awaited her! But should he tamely suffer her to incur it? She, in whom he had learned to garner up his soul—whose love was his life, whose presence made his paradise? Never! never! He would leave a heavy sum in the hands of the Bectachy, to satisfy the Arab dealer for his accursed horse; and on that very animal would he bear away his bride. The thought delighted him; and he hurriedly counted out a heap of gold, and secured it in a sealed bag, which he superscribed with the name of Ali the Toorkoman; and as soon as the twilight fell, he hastened with it to the tomb where he had on the previous night been secreted by the Dervish.

All was silent; and as no voice replied to his cautious whisper, he entered; and groping his way to the spot whence the Bectachy had taken the cypress wine, he removed the stone,

and deposited the gold beside the almost exhausted liquid: and this done, he left the building with a lighter heart than he had known since his compact with the Toorkoman.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE ARAB STEED—*continued.*

SCARCELY had the Aga Baba quitted the room with the son of Yezid, to secure his portion of the spoil yet to be obtained from the supposed pedlar, in the shape of tobacco and sweetmeats; than the fair Delsaisè, bending over her faithful Ziba, murmured, in a low happy voice, the name of Ildji Rezà.

“What of him, Effendimou—my mistress?” she asked: “Mashallah! can it be that my wild suspicion was indeed true? Has he really desecrated the harem of Kassim Bey by his presence?”

“Not so, not so;” smiled the fond girl, trembling with excitement and delight; “Say,

rather, can it be that he has risked his life to gladden the wretched Delsaïsè with the assurance of a love that can survive even insult? Yes, Ziba, yes; it was indeed the son of Yezid who knelt beside me but a moment back—who made the sunbeams of joy penetrate through the lattices of my bosom—who has raised me from the depths of wretchedness to a bliss worthy of the hours! Guzum—my eyes! the light of my being! Janum—my soul! my Sultan! and my Lord! Nor am I even yet desolate, although the day-beam has departed, for I have still this precious anali, which shall be to me as a companion until we again meet!”

And flinging herself back among her cushions like one who brooked no further converse; heedless of the piteous “Eh vah! eh vah!—Mercy on us!” of the terrified and conscience-stricken Ziba, the young beauty commenced the perusal of Ildji Rezà’s communication on the frame-work of the hand-mirror.

As she read, her breath came quick, and her cheek crimsoned—to fly with him from her home, without the solace of a mother’s parting

kiss, and, it might be, pursued by a father's curse; it was a fearful prospect! But to fly with him whom she loved—to be his for ever while life warmed her pulses—to see him, hear him, and devote to him the best energies of her heart—to know that for her, and for her love, he had thus become an exile and a wanderer—there was solace for all her suffering in the thought: and she had many hours yet left to her in which to decide; while she should at least see him once more that very night where they had first met, and hear from his own lips all that he had to urge in favour of a project to which her trusting woman-heart already inclined.

The mirror had wrought its spell; and when the fond girl had pressed again and again to her lips the precious characters which had been inscribed upon it, she plunged it into a vessel of rose-water which stood beside her, and smiled as she saw the writing fade beneath the moisture. And then, how she sighed for the twilight! and when the twilight fell, how earnestly she prayed for night! The calm, soft, perfume-laden night, with its myriad stars, and its fading moon, on

which she guessed not that her young fate was hinged !

And the midnight came at length, and soon the harem of the Bey was hushed in sleep. The cheek of beauty rested on the embroidered cushions of luxury—the music of the zebec, and the voices of the singing women were at rest ; the soul, freed from the heavy prison of the flesh, in which by day it was pent up, stood in all its splendour on the threshold of the spirit-land ; and Fancy, unlocking with a jewelled key the golden barrier of the city of dreams, let loose a troop of iris-habited visions which danced lightly through the realms of slumber ; and cheated many a doomed and stricken wretch into a temporary glory that lent new bitterness to his waking.

Midnight ! In which prowl forth the outcast sinner, and the beast of prey, the terror of the city and of the forest ; the felon, yet unwhipped of justice, whose deeds shun the light ; and the wretched, to whom that light is loathsome. But one kept vigil at that still hour who was none of these : one to whom life had hitherto

offered more of sunshine than of shade ; none of whose thoughts were evil ; and she stood listening for a while at the garden-portal of her proud father's palace, with her white garments gleaming in the moonlight, and her small hand pressed upon her heart to still its beatings, like the fair spirit of another world, wandering by some strange spell among the denizens of this !

There was not a sound to be heard in the harem — even the watchful Aga Baba slept — no voice came from the slumbering city—she heard only the whispering of the leaves to the summer wind, and the fall of the fountain, as the waters plashed on the large petals of the delicate lilac lotus ; and the fair Delsaïsè raised her bright young brow to the blue sky, and smiled as she fled across the open space which intervened between the large basin and the acacia-grove, where she was to meet her lover.

He was already there awaiting her ; and, as he strained her to his heart, and listened to her murmured words of tenderness and trust, he was stricken to the very soul ; and could have grovelled in the dust at her feet, as he remem-

bered the fate to which, in his ignorance and vanity, he had madly doomed her. "It may not yet be too late!" he whispered to himself: "I will redeem my honour while I have yet time: I will tell her all; I will lay bare my unworthiness, and leave her for ever! She is so young, so beautiful, so little fitted to a life of struggle — Allah be thanked, it is not yet too late!"

"Delsaïsè;" he said at length, as he led her deeper into the shadow of the trees; "Sultana of my soul, without whom the sky of life will know no sun; Peri, who wert sent on earth to shew mankind the fellowship that awaits them in Paradise: since I saw thee last; in the few fleeting hours which have elapsed since I talked to thee of love, and flight, and asked of thee the sacrifice of home, and parents, and country; my spirit has sickened at its own selfishness; and now I am here to say that I cannot—that I will not — so wrong thy trust, so ill repay thy tenderness."

"And wherefore?" demanded the fair girl in astonishment; "Did I shrink from the trial?"

Min Allah — Heaven forbid ! That is not love which basks in the sunshine, and cowers under the tempest—that is not love which lives on only in the midst of luxury and ease, and expires in the hour of trial and of tears — Talk not thus, janum—my soul ! Do you abandon nothing when you ask of *me* the sacrifice of home and friends ? Does not our flight entail on you also the loss of both ? And shall I murmur where you do not repine ?”

“ Delsaïsè ;” faltered Ildji Rezà, as he drew a dagger from his girdle ; “ plunge this handjar into my breast ; it will be less painful than words like these ! You know not half my unworthiness—half my crime—but a better feeling is come upon me, and you shall no longer be deceived. Inshallah ! I trust in Heaven, that you will pardon, and forget me.”

“ Forget ‘you !’” echoed the fond girl with pale and quivering lips ; “ What words are these ? If you leave me I shall linger for ever about your memory, as a ghou! wanders among the graves of the dead—for me there will be no

longer stars in heaven, nor flowers upon earth — Ildji Rezà, you shall not leave me !”

“ Ne bilirim — what can I say ?” retorted the anguished lover ; “ At least, ere you abandon yourself to certain hardship, and probable peril, let me tell you all” — and they seated themselves side by side in that leafy solitude, and the son of Yezid poured into the ear of the trembling girl the fatal secret of his mad oath.

“ And you would have given me to another ?” was the tender reproach which first rose to her woman-lip.

“ Alas ! I had never then beheld you — never looked upon the brightness of a beauty, compared with which that of other maiden’s is but as the ray of the fire-fly beside the sunbeam.”

“ And when said you that this fearful compact was to be kept ?”

“ Even at the mahāk ;” gasped out Ildji Rezà.

The wretched girl glanced at the fading moon — it was her last night — the fatal hour was come.

“ Allaha es marladek — Heaven preserve me !” she murmured.

“ He will ! he will ! ” exclaimed the son of Yezid, as he started to his feet ; “ I go, Delsaïsè, with the curse of a broken vow upon me, a perjured man : and I go for ever — the brand is on my brow — the iron in my soul — but better thus, far better, than if your wretchedness were written there ; for I go alone.”

“ Not so — not so — ” said the brave girl, as she stood beside him, and firmly grasped his arm ; “ Hence you go not, unless we go together ; nay, hear me out in my turn ; if you persist, I will arouse the harem, and I will cling to you, and fetter your motions, so that every attempt at escape shall be useless—Need I tell you what will be the result ? ” and she raised her large eyes in horror to his : “ death, death — a bitter and a degrading death ; but we shall at least die together.”

“ Delsaïsè this must not — shall not be — to see you in the power of that fiend would be to me worse than ten thousand deaths.”

“ But we will escape him.”

“ I dare not brave the venture.”

“ Ildji Rezà : ” said the Bey’s daughter ; “ I

am a woman, and yet I say to you, we will dare the danger, and overcome it."

"By what means?" was the gloomy inquiry.

"Inshallah — I trust in Heaven!" answered Delsaisè, as she clasped her hands together, and bowed her head meekly upon her bosom.

"Yet listen to me —" commenced Ildji Rezà deprecatingly.

The voluntary victim only replied by pointing to the moon, whose sickly light was waxing fainter in the distance; and ere she had withdrawn her hand, both were startled by the loud neighing of a steed close under the wall of the garden. Ildji Rezà smote his brow passionately, and flung himself along the earth.

"We are summoned, my soul;" said Delsaisè, in a low shrill whisper which made the blood curdle in his veins; "It is our only chance of escape — if we part, we die; and you are lost here and hereafter."

"I dare not — will not ——"

But again the maiden pointed towards the moon, and the son of Yezid sprang from the earth like a maniac: "Be it so, then;" he ex-

claimed frantically : “ we will fly — we will escape — we will yet be happy.” And he laughed wildly as he lifted the undaunted girl in his arms, and mounting the mouldering wall at the spot which Ziba had formerly indicated, leapt fearlessly from the summit into the road beyond.

Near the tree beside which they stood, the fatal Arabian was made fast to a buttress of the wall, beneath the thick branches of a hanging cedar, by which it was nearly concealed ; in an instant its bridle-rein was in the hand of Ildji Rezà, and he in the saddle, with his precious burthen in his arms. But in vain did the frantic young man attempt to direct the course of the ill-omened steed. Seemingly affrighted by its unaccustomed load, the animal flew recklessly along, as though driven forward by some invisible spirit ; and, heedless alike of bit and stirrup, plunged headlong towards the high precipice indicated by the Toorkoman, beneath which flowed the rapid Barrady.

The brain of Ildji Rezà reeled, and his strength forsook him ; he flung the bridle from his hand, and clasped the slender form of Del-

saïse closer to his heart, while she hid her face upon his shoulder, and neither wept nor spoke. On, on they flew, until borne upon the wind came the triumphant shout of the expectant Toorkoman ; and then once more the heart of the son of Yezid grew big with the advancing peril ; and when they gained the base of the rock, and that the hated form of the Arab Merchant emerged from beneath the shadow of the building by which it was crested, he drew his handjar from his girdle, and clutched it like one who holds to his last hope of life.

But the mad animal paused not beneath the precipice ; with dilated nostrils, expanded eyes, and outstretched neck, he toiled and scrambled up the frightful ascent, leaping like a wild cat over every cleft and chasm, and dashing fragments of the rock from beneath his feet, which fell rattling and plashing into the stream ; until, upon the narrow table-land on which the tower was built, stood the horse and his owner side by side, not many inches from the brink of the precipice.

The pause was brief : for, as the animal

halted beside the Merchant, a heavy hand was laid upon its rein, and it reared violently to escape the pressure ; when it rose on its haunches, Ildji Rezà slackened his grasp of the maiden to strike at the Toorkoman with his handjar ; and as it suddenly recovered its position, impelled earthward by the weight of his bending figure, the abruptness of the motion flung the ill-fated girl from the saddle — One wild shriek rang out on the clear air, as a mass of white drapery fell headlong from the summit of the precipice, and was succeeded by a heavy plash, and the dashing of the severed waters against the base of the rock : and then came a yell, scaring the winds of heaven like the uttered agony of a tortured spirit ; and the son of Yezid vaulted from the saddle to the earth, and stood face to face with his enemy !—There was no waste of words —nothing to learn, nothing to tell ; as Ildji Rezà pointed downward to the death-freighted waters of the river, and sprang to the throat of the Toorkoman like a maniac !

Scarcely a foot's space was between them and a cruel death, whose horrible presence had been

with them but a moment back ; and yet they struggled like men who had the wide earth for their arena. The Merchant was armed as well as his antagonist with a sharp dagger, but for some seconds their weapons were useless ; they grappled like men in the last agony — they wound about each other like serpents — they clung together as though united by some invisible link—it was a wrestling of spirits, where the body bent to the impulses of a mightier influence : but this could not last ; ere long there was a deep gasping groan — a heavy fall — and the Toorkoman was standing over his victim, panting with hatred and exertion ; his teeth clenched, his turban loosened, and his hand bloody : while the first faint ray of dawn just rested on the shining hilt of the weapon which was buried in the heart of Ildji Rezà, and revealed his severed lips and glittering teeth : the hand which still grasped his dagger hung over the precipice ; and as the exulting victor spurned him with his foot, it seemed as though the next touch must hurl him from the brink ; but the Toorkoman, after having by that indig-

nity satiated his hate, bent calmly down, and withdrew his handjar from the breast of his victim, wiping it carefully with the hem of his garment, ere he returned it to the scabbard; this done, he gave one long shrill whistle, and forth from beneath the shadow of the building came the Bectachy.

“Gidelem—let us go;” said Ali hoarsely; “the kavashlir* will scent the carrion, and some foul chance may put them upon my track—Cursed be the stripling arm that could not keep a firmer hold! I have lost my bride—I am for El Masr—when you next hear of me I shall be snuffing the sea-breeze at Boulac. Meanwhile, there is your gold, and with it this screed of counsel:—when you would again sell yourself to Sheitan, see that you earn your wages more manfully, or you may chance to be paid in another coin!” and having struck his hand contemptuously on the hilt of his weapon, and flung a purse at the feet of the Dervish, the Toorkoman seized the bridle-rein of his horse, and led him to the base of the rock, when,

* City police.

springing lightly to the saddle, he galloped away across the plain.

It was a Bectachy who some hours subsequently carried to the house of Yezid the Khawaji the dark tidings of his son's murder, and led the agonized father to the spot where lay his child: and who shortly afterwards went on his way rejoicing, for he had earned gold by his discovery, and escaped suspicion.

The Barrady ere sunset gave up its dead; and many were the surmises which were hazarded throughout Damascus, at the extraordinary coincidence which on the same day had plunged two families in tears and lamentations, that were to have been united in bonds of relationship. Dark hints, and mysterious whispers were busy in the bazārs; and even Latif Effendi himself forebore to jest on an occurrence apparently inexplicable; while, as neither the Toorkoman dealer nor the wandering Dervish ever again appeared in Damascus, the truth would never have come to light, had not Ali the Khawaji told the tale when he was lying on his death-bed

at Scanderia, waiting with the lively faith of a True Believer to be wafted on the dark wings of Asraël to the arms of the Houri.

PART II.

CHAPTER XVIII

“BY the Black stone at Mecca!* he was a more fitting companion for the Ghouls and Afrits of Jehanum;” yawned the Pasha, as the low voice of Katinka ceased; not altogether conscious whether he had really heard or only dreamed the termination of the Merchant’s adventures: “Anesseny sikdam!† was he not a dog, and the father of dogs? And was the paradise of the Faithful ever meant to be an abiding-place for the unclean? Wallah billah — by the Prophet! you might as well people it with franks and giaours! What say you, janum—my soul?”

* The famous stone in the holy sepulchre, which is kissed by every Moslem on his arrival.

† An expression of contempt.

he added, turning to his fair wife, down whose pale cheeks the large tears were coursing each other in streams: "Do you believe that Ali the Toorkoman ever bathed in rivers of milk, and drank his sherbet in Paradise?"

"Allah forbid!" murmured Carimfil Hanoum piously: "such as he were strange company for the houri of Corkam." *

"As to Ildji Reza;" pursued the Satrap, who was inclined to be critical under the gentle approbation of his wife; "the man had no wit in him; he blackened his own face, and deserved his fate; though it was hard that the poor girl should suffer—But what said I? what is written, is written—and she merited her destiny; for had she not desecrated the harem by allowing the foot of a stranger to tread its carpets? By the head of the Emperor! had I been Kassim Bey——"

What the Satrap would have added is unknown, as the threat terminated in a volume of smoke which curled down his beard, and left the remainder of the sentence unuttered; but the

* Paradise.

cheek of the Circassian flushed painfully for an instant, and then became pale as the leaf of the river-lotus : and her heart heaved as though it would have burst the shawl that cinctured her waist.

The Greek, meanwhile, sat apart ; deep thought was on her brow, and something like contempt wreathed her lip as she marked the emotion of her friend, and the obtuse self-complacency of the Pasha. To her more wily spirit the victim seemed scarce worthy to be deceived ; and yet, even amid that conviction, strange speculations and wild visions grew upon her — The Circassian loved another—*her* brother—the last relative whom she now possessed on earth — When they fled together—and fly together they would, she felt and knew if they again met—she should be alone ; they would be everything to each other ; and she should have no hold on the great chain of society if she fashioned not the link herself—She glanced at the Pasha—he was old ; but what availed it to count his years ? — he was dull and vain ; but these were qualities which insured a wife's supremacy—he might be weighed

in the holy wezn* with half the Satraps in the pay of the Padishah, and not kick the beam ; he was in short—a Turk—and the lip of the beautiful Greek curled again into deeper disdain than before.

But the electric spark had been struck ; and Katinka, with the quick talent of her nation, possessed also its craft and selfishness ; and slowly, by almost imperceptible degrees, her manner towards the Pasha changed. Even Carimfil *felt* that it did so ; but it was impossible to say in what the change consisted—perhaps the voice was a shade softer than before ; the bright eye shadowed ; the light step less elastic : but, be it what it might, the young wife was satisfied, as it harmonised with her own pensive mood, and dreamy tendencies ; for now Katinka sighed where she used to rally, and sympathised where she had formerly chidden.

The Satrap himself was the last to perceive the revolution which had taken place in the beautiful Greek ; but he was conscious, during his visits to the harem, that the flexible form of the young slave flitted more frequently before him ;

* The balance of the Prophet.

that the courteous offices which she rendered to him were more graciously and more gracefully performed : and, at length, he even detected her eyes resting upon him with an expression of melancholy tenderness and abstraction that he could not fail to remark.

The Pasha smoked and wondered; and gazed alternately at his wife and her friend, until the deep glowing beauty of the Greek grew upon his fancy, and threw the pale loveliness of the Circassian into the shade; and then he pondered within himself whether Katinka indeed loved him, and began to note with increasing interest every action of the wily slave. He slept no more when she swept the chords of her zebec, though its music had become more subdued and mournful; and when she sang, he listened yet more complacently, for her words told of hopeless passion, and love which fed upon itself, and clung to its own ruin. The sherbet offered by her hand had more sweetness, and the chibouque more perfume; and, in short, the visits of the Pasha to the harem became more frequent and more lengthened as he gradually yielded to the

conviction that he was beloved. Carimfil, beautiful and indulged as she was, had never loved him : yet here beside her was a young creature to the full as fair, glowing with talent and enthusiasm, graceful as a simorg, and musical as a bulbul, whose looks betrayed to him the secret of her heart !

The idea was fascinating ; and the Satrap dwelt upon it with increased satisfaction from day to day ; carefully abstaining from a word or a gesture which might awaken the jealousy of his wife ; and it was reserved for the breath of song to break the spell, and to afford to Katinka the first assurance that she was understood.

The fair Carimfil was, on one occasion, more melancholy even than her wont, the Pasha more silent and more tedious ; and the crafty Greek felt her power to chase this gloom, and to render the Satrap conscious of the value of her acquirements : without a word, therefore, and regardless of any bidding, she struck a few wild chords upon her instrument, and with bowed head, and eyes bent to the earth, she murmured out her song.

My childhood's home was 'mid the isles
 That gem the bright Egean sea ;
 Where summer in its beauty smiles,
 And song-birds hold their jubilee.
 Where sunshine with the ocean blent,
 And rested on its loving breast ;
 And every hour, in passing, lent
 Some charm to earth to make it blest.

I never dreamed I could forget
 That blissful home ; but ah ! the heart
 When its warm flow with love is met
 Can make its own bright world apart ;
 'Tis only when unloved—alone—
 And blighted—that I sigh to be
 In the dear isle where once I dwelt
 Amid the bright Egean Sea !

As the song ceased, the dark eyes of Katinka sought those of the Pasha, and she read there an assurance that thenceforward her island-home might be forgotten.

“ Mail oldum — I have fallen in love ! ” communed the Satrap with himself ; but he only gave utterance to a low grunt of approval, and a “ Pek ahi, Bèyaz — very well ” — as he drew a jewelled ring from his finger, and tendered it to the songstress : “ Your voice is pleasant as the south wind, and we owe you some requital for

the enjoyment." And as the Greek prostrated herself before him, the Pasha held her hand a moment longer than was necessary, while he gave the gem into her possession.

"Where the nightingale harbours, there is no need to welcome the thrush;" said the Pasha, when Katinka had made her prostration, and returned to her place; "and where the fair Bèyaz dwells, the awali (singing-women) are needless."

The languid Circassian smiled; her thoughts were with Maniolopolo; and it was a relief to her when the Pasha at length quitted the harem, and she could throw herself upon the bosom of her friend, to talk of the lover of her youth, and weep over his absence.

Skilfully did Katinka fan the flame; she called up memories which made the heart of the unhappy wife beat high with tenderness and regret — she speculated on the future until the pale cheek burned, and the slight form quivered with emotion—she mocked at the Pasha's blindness, and made merry at the expence of his complacent vanity: and then she digressed to

her brother — that brother who had long been every thing to both of them — she reminded the fond Circassian, who required no prompting to do full justice to the memory of his perfections, of all the noble qualities of his nature ; and how adversity, like the tile on the acanthus, had at once subdued and beautified his free and haughty spirit.

The twilight stole on them ere the subject was yet half exhausted ; and then they wandered forth into the dim gardens, with their white arms wreathed about each other's necks, and whispered of him to the stars, and to the leaves, by the low murmuring of the fountains ; and finally they sank to rest, each with her own bright vision ready to melt itself into a dream, and charm the hours of the long summer night.

Maniolopolo had, meanwhile, reached the city, but had hitherto failed in every attempt to make his vicinity known to the inmates of the Pasha's harem. In vain he traversed the streets, and gazed stealthily at every yashmac that he encountered, he met neither the fair Carimfil nor his sister ; and after hours and days spent

in haunting the palace of the Satrap, he became at length convinced that unless he discovered some expedient by which he might penetrate under his very roof, he was as far distant from the accomplishment of his wishes, as though he had remained in Circassia.

Vexed to the soul, Maniolopolo, on the sixth evening of his unprofitable watching, turned away from the walls which separated him from the bright object of his thoughts ; and, careless of his path, sauntered on until he reached the Theriaki Tcharchi,* whence the sounds of music came floating pleasantly on the still air.

“ You are welcome, Effendim ; ” said a portly personage who was gravely smoking his chibouque on a raised wooden platform overarched with vines, without the door of the building ; “ A caravan has just arrived, on its way to Bassora, and among the travellers are some celebrated almè (dancing girls), whom one of the hadjis, who is my friend, has prevailed upon to lodge in my house during their stay in the city ;

* Resort for Opium-eaters.

they are about to dance, and again I say that you are welcome."

Maniolopolo hesitated: he was well aware of the scenes of violence which occasionally take place among the opium-eaters during their paroxysms of temporary madness; but ere long, as the master of the Tcharchi enlarged upon the grace and beauty of one of the fair band, his reluctance vanished; and he suffered himself to be ushered into the spacious apartment, around which, on low and luxurious divans, sat about a score of the most dissolute youths of the city; while the centre of the floor was overspread with a Persian carpet, on which stood a groupe of young and splendidly-habited women, about to commence their performance.

Maniolopolo had never before witnessed a similar exhibition, and he looked on with as much curiosity as amusement; occasionally joining in the low chorus of approbation, which from time to time broke from the other spectators. Never had he seen so much raki and kakabi* swallowed in the same space of time, nor so

* Ardent spirits.

much khaf, and beng, and hashish, and afiou* devoured; and it was consequently without surprise that, as the hours grew into night, he found the voice of revelry rapidly deepening into discord; nor could he forbear a smile when he heard the rioters reproaching each other with the very vices to which they were themselves addicted; “Theriakee—opium-eater!” shouted one; “dost thou, maddened by the poison that thou hast swallowed, dare to argue with me?” — “Dog of a wine-drinker!” exclaimed a second; “is it when thou art drunk with the liquid fire of the Infidels, that thou talkest to a Mahommedan of his duty?”

Blows followed fast on words; and throwing down a coin which offered ample payment for the entertainment of the Tcharchi, Maniolopolo hastened to escape from the pollution of the scene; leaving half-a-dozen unturbaned heads rolling on the floor, amid a chorus of expletives more energetic than courteous; and the shrill shrieks of the women, who, huddled together in a corner, were trembling with affright.

* Intoxicating drugs,

But his visit to the Theriakee Tcharchi had not been altogether unprofitable to the young Greek ; and he anxiously awaited the morrow in order to carry into effect the plot which he had been contemplating during the performances of the almè.

CHAPTER XIX.

“ I HAVE dreamt a dream ;” said Saifula Pasha on his next visit to the harem of his wife : “ a dream which lasted me the whole night. Bashustun—on my head be it ! I will give a purse to whomsoever can read it to me aright.”

“ I have been said to have some lore on the subject of visions ;” said Katinka eagerly ; “ my mother read them like a book —Will it please your Excellency to describe it to me ?”

“ And why not ?” was the reply ; “ Listen, and you shall hear.—I was at Stamboul, in the bright ‘ City of the Three Seas,’ but peace was not within her walls : there were flames, and shouts, and sounds of warfare ; and the streets

ran blood; and then, *Ou Allah!* I thought that I was deposed from my pashalik, and that all my wealth was swept away, and I was a ruined man; and there came a season of famine; and you, *guzum—*” and he turned, and looked fondly towards his wife; “you were beside me, and we both hungered; when suddenly the *Pa-dishah*—(may his beard flourish!) sent us a tray of *tchalva* and a dish of *pillauf*. But even as we ate, the cry came to us of those who famished; and, *Wallah!* our repast was bitterly seasoned by the anguish of those whom we could not succour—’Twas a dark dream, and I am troubled by it! Speak, *Bèyaz*; can you tell what it signifies?”

“Your highness did well to terminate the fast by a feast;” said the Greek girl with assumed gravity; “your dream bodes you nothing but good; uncertainty for a time, but ultimate success in all your projects. I shall look ere long to see you summoned to *Stamboul* by the Lord of the Three Seas, and to hear you saluted as *Muschir* Saïfula Pasha*.”

“*Allah bilir—Allah alone knows;*” answered

* *Pasha of Three Tails.*

the Satrap with a complacent smile: "By the soul of my father, should you be a true prophet, you shall find that I am not unmindful of your prophecy — Chok chay — that is much." And the Pasha looked as magnanimous on the faith of his promise, as though he had rewarded the beautiful soothsayer for her vague solution with a hundred purses.

"The dream of my lord has brought to my own mind a memory of the past;" said Katinka, as a veil of sadness fell over her deep eyes — "I have a tale whose grief will teach all visionary sorrow to pass away before it, as the mists of morning disperse before the sun-break — or as the desert-sands are scattered by the simoom — I will tell it now, if my lord listens." And having received an encouraging nod from the Pasha, whose chibouque had just been replenished, and whose cushions were arranged with a care to which no luxury could be added, she seated herself at his feet; and shaking back the long hair which fell over her brow and bosom, and assuming as if unconsciously the stern expression, and impressive attitude of a Pythoness, she commenced her recital.

CHAPTER XX.

THE LAST OF THE JANISSARIES.

THE day of blood that witnessed the destruction of the Janissaries was at an end. The sunlight had faded upon the mountains; the stars were multiplied upon the ripple of the sea of Marmora; the fitful wind sighed through the forest-boughs; and, save in the excited city of Stamboul, all was peace, as a tall and shrouded figure emerged from among the tombs in the necropolis of Eyoub. He paused for a moment when he stood upon the crest of the hill above the village, and shook his clenched hand passionately in the direction of the smouldering pile which had so lately been the funeral-pyre of hundreds of his comrades — of scores of his

townsmen and associates—His breast heaved—his pulses quivered—It was Yusuf—the far-famed, the formidable Yusuf! When the yesterday's sun had gilded the domes of the golden city, he had been an Aga of Janissaries—What was he now? He had seen the strong limbs of his brother—of Omar the fleet-footed—quiver, as he hung suspended from the fatal cord to the “Tree of Groans” in the Atmeidan, one of a thousand of the same hour's victims—he had seen it, and he felt that his heart was broken. Omar was the last son of his mother—the pet lamb of the fold—in the pride of his spirit he had left his paternal roof to carry arms beside his brother Yusuf—and he had died the death of blood before that brother's eyes.

The curse was deep and fearful with which, after wading in carnage, and fighting like a demoniac under the shadow of Omar's corpse, the Aga was borne away by the stream of fugitives, who, hopeless at length of victory, sought safety in a flight as unpromising as their resistance. The band, fighting as they retreated, grew weaker every instant; long pent-up hate was

loosed, and the fury of the inhabitants of the polluted city seconded the more organised attacks of the soldiery. The wretched Janissaries, maddened by their despair, fought furiously to the last ; and the streets, along which they passed, were choked with dead.

The scymitar of Yusuf gleamed above his head, and he had just aimed a stroke at a new opponent when the earth gave way beneath his feet, and he fell heavily for a considerable depth, pressed upon in his descent by the body of the man whom he had slain. He heard a shout as he disappeared, but the yell endured only for a moment ; the fierce crowd hurried on, and ere long he could distinguish a hoarse murmur which told him that the tide of blood was flowing in a distant part of the city.

The Aga's first care was to glare stealthily around, and he was immediately conscious of a faint light streaming through a cavity in the roof of the subterranean into which he had been so opportunely introduced. Not a sound betokened the vicinity of any human companionship ; and Yusuf next hurled from above him

the body of his enemy, which yet lay heavily across his own. This done, he slowly stretched forth limb after limb, to assure himself that he was uninjured by the fall ; and, having satisfied himself of the fact, he was not long in ascertaining the nature of his compulsory retreat.

Yusuf, as he rose from the earth, stood in a spacious vault, surrounded on all sides by stately columns of marble, and dimly lighted by narrow grated windows level with the roof ; and at once understood that he tenanted, in company with the dead man at his feet, the immense cistern of Ben-Vebir-Direg — the Vault of the Thousand-and-One Columns. He shuddered as the truth burst upon him ; for he remembered that, although, during the hours of daylight, a crowd of miserable wretches congregated there to spin silk, and thus earn amid its noxious vapours a scanty and insufficient existence, it was a place of evil repute by night ; and said to be peopled by beings whose demoniac nature shut them out from “ the glimpses of the moon.”

But Yusuf was brave by nature, nor was this a moment to yield to weak and childish terrors :

death was about him everywhere, and he was ready to bless Allah and the Prophet that he had found even this temporary haven during a night of terror.

The secret of his personal impunity after so great a fall was simple—the water-courses of the cistern having been turned during the erection of St. Sophia, and the vault used as a receptacle for the soil dug out from the foundations—the earth upon which he alighted was sufficiently elastic to secure him from greater injury than a few slight bruises; but the wild legends which now localised their superstitions at Ben-Vibir-Direg rendered the locality any thing but holy in the eyes of the Moslem : a thousand dark and fearful memories of the subterranean rushed across the brain of the fugitive—strange, and wild, and fearful shapes all located by popular rumour in this gloomy spot ; and thus, bold as he was, although preoccupied by other and more certain evils, had Yusuf-Aga been free to select his hiding-place, he would assuredly not have chosen the haunted subterranean.

The dull but instant echoes of the dreary space

repeated every sound ; and as the wretched fugitive slowly paced among the columns, searching for some point of escape, of which he might avail himself under shelter of the darkness, the hollow reverberations of his own footsteps made his brow burn, and his heart throb, as he mistook them in his terror for the tramp of approaching enemies.

He soon discovered that his only hope of egress was by the very spot of his entrance ; a narrow opening, formed by the decay of a mass of masonry, which had partially yielded to the unusual weight of the contending crowd ; and for an instant his spirit quailed, as his eye, accustomed to the darkness, betrayed to him the insecure and threatening state of that section of the roof which touched upon the aperture. Yet to stay in this gloomy vault, to incur the certain penalty of starvation or discovery, was yet more frightful ; and Yusuf having resolved upon at least attempting his escape, when night should have fallen upon the city, and examined with care the dangerous accessories by whose means it was to be accomplished, ultimately turned his attention to the dead body which lay near him.

His superstitious tremors were not lessened on discovering, from certain mysterious-looking articles carefully concealed about the person of the stranger, that he was a karabash, or wise man; a description of person with whom no good Musselmaun ever desires to meddle in a hostile manner. “Y’Allah—in the name of the Prophet! Is this my work?” murmured the Aga to himself: “Haremzadeh—ill-born that I am! Was it not enough that I should see my brother hung like a dog, and swinging in the wind—and be hunted through the streets of the city like a wild beast by the yelling cowards who once kissed the dust from my slippers; but I must myself throw dirt upon the grave of my father, and slay a karabash?”

And he rocked himself to and fro for several minutes, as he sat beside the body of his victim, uttering the low “Amān! amān!—alas! alas!” of a stricken spirit; while at intervals he started in affright, as the echoes of the vault flung back the lamentation like the mocking of fiends!

Gradually, however, he recovered from his

panic, with the eternal kismet of his faith ; and he then proceeded to strip the body of the karabash, and to attire himself in the dead man's garments ; after which he carefully dressed the corpse in his own, ere he indulged himself with a more detailed survey of his newly appropriated possessions.

The shawl which had formed the turban of the karabash was coarse in texture, and uninviting in appearance ; but as the Aga withdrew it, and began to wind it about his own head, several pieces of large gold coin fell from amid its folds, to the extreme gratification of Yusuf, who saw in them a possible mean of escape from the terrors of the blood-drenched city. In a few moments the disguise was perfect ; and having squared his beard with a knife which he carried in his girdle, the Aga of the Janissaries was conscious that to the eye of a stranger he might pass unsuspected.

A few papers, which Yusuf was unable to decypher, but which, prudently remembering that should he leave them in the vault they might lead to his own detection, he resolved on

carrying away ; and, save these, a tobacco-purse of the most common description, and a chaplet of cedar wood, a few paras carefully tied up in a little bag, and a small box of black dye, constituted all the personal effects of the dead man ; and piously exclaiming “ Allah buyûk der — God is great ! ” Yusuf had soon emptied the box of dye over his beard and mustachoes.

These arrangements made, the Aga had no other occupation for the remaining hours of daylight than sitting on the damp earth, and commending the souls of the Sultan, his Pashas, and his Yuzbashis (captains) to the keeping of Satan ; spitting upon the graves of their ancestors ; and branding themselves and their relatives with all the opprobrious epithets with which his language is rife ; until, as time wore on, his bitterness slowly yielded place to gentler and fonder feelings ; and his thoughts recurred to Omar — to his brother — and then, burying his face in his hands, the fierce Janissary, the blood-thirsty Aga, the remorseless Moslem, wept !

“ Allah ! Allah ! It is hard to bear : ” he

murmured ; “but who am I that I should rebel against the Prophet of the Faithful ? Sen etkiar der—you are the master ; Sen bilirsen — you know best. Because I sit down beside the dried-up fountain, shall the spring well out afresh ? If I say that my caique shall travel westward, will the wind blow from Mecca to fill her sails ?” And again the strong man wept ; but this time it was in a sadder and a calmer spirit.

Other visions grew upon him as he lingered there. His mother had wooed a fair young bride to his home : yet another week, and she was to have been his—the light of his eyes, and the day-beam of his existence. Where was she now ? and by whom would she be won ? A shadow fell upon his brow which danger had never called there, for all was over ; he had no longer a home—should he even escape, he must live an exile, and die a stranger to his own land ; the “ Captain of a Hundred ” was a crouching fugitive, for whom the brand and the bowstring were alike ready. The eldest-born of his house was proscribed and pursued — Yusuf Aga

was no more — there remained only the trembling and torture-menaced victim of a new creed.

Not a ray broke across the murky sky of his fortunes — not a hope gleamed upon his future — he was a doomed man — and for a moment the bold Aga resolved to remain and abide his fate ; but as the deep darkness suddenly fell around him, after that brief and almost imperceptible twilight which in the East endures but for a moment, other thoughts and fears grew upon him — positive danger and superstitious terrors became blended in his imagination — he dreaded discovery, and shrank appalled at every gust of wind which penetrated into the vault : while a moment after, the deep stillness well nigh maddened him ; and he peopled the fearful space with shadowless forms, and the tall columns wore to his overheated fancy the semblance of gaunt and deathlike phantoms.

It was after one of these intervals of intense and solemn terror that he sprang hurriedly from the earth, and resolved to incur any risk, rather than endure a recurrence of such maddening

emotions. Even in the darkness he turned away from the spot whereon he knew that the dead karabash was stretched ; and following the wall with his hands, he felt the fresh air breathing upon his brow from above, and at once commenced his perilous ascent.

“ La illaha illallah—there is but one Allah !” whispered the wretched man between his clenched teeth, as he endeavoured to secure a footing in the interstices of the masonry : an object in which he was repeatedly baffled by the darkness.

“ Alhemdullillah—Praises be to Allah !” he at length exclaimed, wiping the drops from his brow with the sleeve of his vest, as he balanced himself on the rough edge of a projecting mass. But his pious self-gratulation was only momentary, for, with a crash which was echoed with frightful distinctness from the innermost recesses of the subterranean, the tottering stone gave way, and, in its fall, flung Yusuf violently to the earth.

“ Lahnet be Sheitan — curse on the devil !” exclaimed the baffled captive, with that sudden

transition of feeling which among the Turks forms so singular a contrast from their placid equanimity of manner: "Allah bela versin—Heaven send it misfortunes! Do the very stones wage war for the bloody-minded Mahmoud? Am I to be baulked by a mass of marble?" And, with renewed energy, he rose from the earth, and once more groped his way to the aperture through which he distinguished a solitary star hanging in the heavens like a lamp of silver. The Aga hailed it as a good omen; again he put forth all his strength, and, after the struggle of a moment, he secured a safe footing in the chasm whence the last stone had fallen. With his eye fixed steadily upon the friendly star, he put forth his arms in every direction until his hand came in contact with an iron staple, whence a portion of the marble frieze that had once adorned the roof of the vault had been detached by time. A few violent efforts sufficed to convince him of its firm hold upon the stone into which it had been driven; and his next attempt was to swing himself suddenly upward, in order to seize the edge of the masonry pro-

jecting over the opening. Twice did he essay this dangerous exploit, and fail; while the blood spouted from his nostrils with the shock, and his hands clung maimed and smarting to the rusted iron; but all the energy of his nature was now aroused, and he did not suffer himself to pause.

“Korkma — fear not, Yusuf;” he almost shouted in a fit of temporary delirium; “Allah wills not that you should die the death of an earth-worm — On! on! — a bright star beckons you — you may yet live to revenge the death of the murdered Omar.”

As the words escaped him, a wild blast swept through the vault, and the excited Yusuf believing that he heard the voice of the karabash, aroused from the sleep of death by his own menace of revenge, swung himself once more madly upward, and fell on the rude pavement of the deserted street.

For awhile he lay stunned and motionless; but as the night-air swept lovingly across his forehead he slowly revived: and with returning consciousness grew the memory of his jeopardy.

Painfully and with difficulty he arose from the earth — bruised alike in body and in spirit ; and carefully avoiding the more frequented streets whence the yell of blood yet came to his ear, he stealthily made his way to the sacred cemetery of Eyoub.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE LAST OF THE JANISSARIES—*continued.*

It was a glorious night as he stood there, on the hill-top, among the quiet graves: but all was riot in the bosom of the disguised Janissary. He was alone: far as his eye could wander in the clear starlight he could distinguish no human being save himself; and he moved slowly downward among the tall tombs, and crossed the wide and deserted street, until he paused by the water's edge—upon the lip of the land-locked port, whose ripple was ruddy with the fitful reflection of the burning pile which had once been to him as a home.

“Allah buyûk der — God is great!” he said passionately: “It must be even as he wills.

The clouds are for the wing of the wild bird — the billows for the monsters of the deep — and blood for the great ones of the earth —” and he smiled bitterly as he turned away, and under the shadow of the tall trees which over-canopy the village, stole hastily once more into the street.

The door of a house, about midway of the hamlet, stood partially open; and after the pause of a moment, the disguised Aga passed the threshold, and then closed the gate, and secured it by a rude bar on the inside. All was silence throughout the dwelling, and the wanderer moved onward like one to whom the locality was familiar, until he reached a chamber in which a dim light was burning in a lamp upon the floor.

The room had but one tenant; an aged woman, half buried amid cushions on a low sofa, and so absorbed in grief as to be unconscious of the intruder's presence.

“Eh vah! delhi der — they are madmen!” broke at intervals from her lips: “Was it for this that a son was born to me in my old age,

and that my first-born became strong in battle, and great in power ! Bana bak — look at me — what am I, that I should be childless in my weak years, when the grave is dug for me among the Faithful—Eh vah ! why did I not die before this sorrow fell on my gray hairs !” And again she buried her face in her spread hands, and the deep “amān” of utter wretchedness burst from her quivering lips.

“ All are not gone !” said a deep voice at the threshold of the apartment ; and the mourner wildly thrust back the dishevelled hair from her brow, and glanced hurriedly towards the speaker : “ The youngest and the fairest has passed away, and his blood is on the head of his murderers ; but Yusuf, the spirit-broken — Yusuf, the dishonoured, yet lives — his beard is plucked out, and the grave of his father is defiled — He who was an Aga of Janissaries, is now a sakil-siz — a no-beard — but he is still the son of his mother — and lo ! he is here.”

As the dull eye of the old woman detected under the disguise of the karabash the features of her son, and her ear drank in his accents, she

tottered towards him with a faint scream, and in the next moment she was clasped fondly to his breast.

“ My son :” she murmured ; “ my first and fairest ; you are restored to me—I am no longer alone — Allah has preserved for me my brave Yusuf, the sun of my evening sky—my Aga—”

“ Hush, mother :” whispered the fugitive ; “ call me no longer by a name which is but another term for blood — we are swept from the face of the earth — the strong men of power are no more —”

“ Chok chay — that is much :” said the old woman with frightful calmness ; “ but you are here, and to me bosh der — it is nothing.”

“ Listen to me, mother :” urged Yusuf, as he released himself from her clasp, and led her gently to the sofa. “ If I do not escape from the city before the sun rises over the mountain of Bulgurlhu, I shall never again look upon it — my life is forfeit — Allah es marladek—Allah preserve you ! I have come but to say my farewell to you for ever ere I depart : I have yet time to fly.”

“ And whither ? ” asked his mother earnestly ; “ are not the blood-hounds abroad ? Do you hope to escape from the Padishah who has vowed your ruin ? Are you maddened by your misery when you forget that the light of his power stretches along the earth from the east even to the west, and that the shadow of his greatness lies upon the deep waters ? Sen chok adam — you are much of a man, Yusuf Aga ; but there is no safety for you save in the arms of your mother.”

The smitten Janissary shook his head bitterly.

“ I am old and poor ; ” pursued the anxious parent : “ I am helpless ; and therein will lie my strength—who would seek the man of might in the dwelling of the feeble and gray-haired widow of Abdul the shawl-mender ? ”

“ Ne apalum — what can we do ? ” asked Yusuf despondingly.

“ What can we *not* do, if Allah spare us to each other ? ” retorted his mother, encouraged by his partial acquiescence. “ Yusuf, my son, what may yet happen we know not ; Allah bilir — God alone knows ; but we are taught not to

tempt evil. Better to live in darkness than to die the death of blood — better to crouch beneath a wayside briar than to lie unsheltered from the storm. Stay with me, my son: the cloud may pass away from the land — the bash pezevenk—the vile wretch, who has brought this evil upon the children of the Prophet, may yet fall before the fire of vengeance — and then —”

“ All is over !” said Yusuf, with the calmness of despair: “ the rest is but a dream. Haif ! haif ! — shame ! shame ! that they who have so long upheld the glory of the Faithful, and the banner of the Prophet, should be trodden beneath the feet of dogs in the city streets — a by-word for giaours and infidels !” And as he ceased speaking, his aged mother caught his indignant tone, and echoed back “ Haif ! haif ! — Shame ! shame ! ”

The joy of meeting once more her first-born son had for a brief time effaced from the memory of the aged Fatma the loss of the bright-eyed Omar: but when the burst of delight had spent itself, and that she had time to recall the words of Yusuf as he entered, the fear of death

grew upon her, and a sickness of the heart bent her even to the earth.

“And the absent one—” she gasped out ;
 “the child of my age—where is he ?”

“Gardash ! gardash ! — Brother ! brother !” exclaimed Yusuf, clasping his hands forcibly together ; “Thou of the fleet foot and the eagle-eye — thou of the kind smile and the soft voice —thy race is run—thy gaze is dimmed—livid is thy lip in death ; and thine accents will be no more heard, save by the houris of Paradise.”

“La illaha illallah—there is but one Allah !” groaned the bereaved woman ; “The great and the mighty of the earth are beyond the vengeance of a mother’s arm, but they are not beyond her curse—It will cling ! Yusuf, it will cling !—fell and heavy is ever the curse of a broken heart, when the grey head and the dim eye are bowed over the grave of the beautiful and the young, murdered in their beauty and their youth : but feller and heavier still is the malison of a mother poured out upon the fierce heart and the bloody hand which have bereft her of her fond ones. Eh vah ! I will sit down be-

side the grave of my brave boy, and the bitterness of my spirit shall have way."

"By the grave of Omar, of your last-born, will you never sit, my mother?" was the slow reply: "the dead of to-day have not passed from earth upon their cushions:—the brand and the cord have done their work—Omar is among those whose grave no man shall ever find." And as he ceased speaking, Yusuf cast himself upon the earth, and covered his face with his robe.

"Is it so?" said Fatma, while a fierce gleam lit up her dull eye; "Then will I only think of him when my heart melts at the grief of another, that I may steel myself against that mercy which has been withheld from me and mine—And for he who has wrought this ruin—may the Evil Eye smite him on the threshold of the mosque, and blight his prayers;—may he never know slumber by night, nor peace by day—may every breath of air which fans his brow be polluting as the plague-wind—and may his children wither, and expire before his eyes at the moment when they are most dear to him!"

And the stricken man who lay at her feet raised his head from the earth for a moment, and responded to her malison with a hoarse “Amen !”

It was again the old woman whose voice broke upon this second and frightful silence ; as from mourning for her lost son, she turned to fears for the one who was yet left to her : “ Swear to me, my child, my brave and noble boy ;” she said with startling suddenness, as her thoughts painted in colours too terrible for her to bear the probable consequences of his discovery : “ Swear to me — you who are now my only tie to earth — that you will not attempt to escape — that you will remain here beneath the roof of your dead father — that you will never again venture forth into the streets of this accursed city, whose minarets point to heaven as if to direct the vengeance which will not fail. — The men of blood are ever abroad ; let me not have to weep over my last child.”

“ Mother ;” said Yusuf as he rose from the earth, and seated himself at her feet ; “ Ne bili-rim — what can I say ? You ask for water

during a drought when no rain falls; and for pomegranates when the world is wrapped in snow. Ne apalum—what can I do? I am yet young, and my years may be many; can I pass them in darkness, and with a chain upon my spirit? You are old and feeble; and since Allah took my father to himself, I have filled your dish with pillauf, and your cup with sherbet—how am I to buy rice, or to earn bread to support you and myself, save by escaping to a far province where I am unknown, and selling my sword to the Pasha? Allah buyûk der—God is great! I have yet some gold which I can leave with you until I may summon you hence, and offer you a roof in my place of exile.”

“And what will be gold to me;” asked Fatma; “when I am bereft of both my children? Can gold dry the tears of anguish, or buy a light heart when grief has bowed down the spirit?—Will gold give me back the days when my sons sat at my feet, and I blessed them in the fullness of my joy, as I saw them tall and stately as two cedar trees, and beautiful as the light of morning? One is gone—gone with all

his glory about him, to the grave—and when the other leaves me to brave the death his brother died, he talks to me of gold ! Bana bak — look at me ! am I not too feeble to outlive the loss of my last hope ?”

“ Hai, hai—true, true—it is indeed hard that in your old age and your bitter anguish you should be called upon to suffer another grief ;” said Yusuf soothingly : “ but, alas ! my mother, there is no alternative. Inshallah !—I trust in Allah !—I am disguised ; and under the shadow of the darkness, if I am prompt and cautious, I may escape. Hinder me not then ; let me go forth with your blessing upon me ; the world is wide, and a strong arm and a bold heart will never lack a weapon. Bashustun—on my head be it ! I will yet make the name of Yusuf ring in the ears of the men of strength.”

“ Chok chay—that is much ;” replied the old woman, catching a portion of his momentary enthusiasm ; “ you are a man, and you have the heart of a man ; as for your enemies, haivan der—they are animals—dogs, and the fathers of dogs, and I spit upon their beards——”

“I will go forth then, mother ;” said the Aga, attempting to rise.

“What shall I say ?” exclaimed the agonized old woman : “my son ! my son ! shall I not die as you pass the threshold ? — and yet, no — not so—I have no right to hold you back—why should you live in darkness and in dread, when you might be foot-free upon the mountains, and bathing your brow in the clear waters of the valley ? Go then—since it is better so—go—oghoul ola—God speed you ! Better that I should pine in my solitude than that I should see your bold heart breaking from day to day—Sen ektiar der—you are the master : I am but a woman, and your’s must be the words of wisdom : but linger not long, my son, ere you send me tidings of your existence, or I shall be as a fountain that is dried up, and as a cypress that is withered.”

Anxious to avail himself of the remaining darkness, and rejoiced to find his mother in so resigned a frame of mind, Yusuf hastily poured into her lap the gold which he had found in the turban of the karabash ; and then, folding her

to his heart, and breathing above her a devout prayer to Allah that they might once more meet in happiness, he laid her gently back upon her cushions, and rushed out of the house.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE LAST OF THE JANISSARIES—*continued.*

Not an hour after the wretched Yusuf quitted the roof of his mother, a loud outcry arose in one of the most squalid streets of the city, abutting on an obscure quay frequented principally by fishermen. There were sounds of pursuit — shouts of fierce threatening, mingled with curses of baffled hate; and as the trembling tenants of the neighbouring houses rose on their sofas to listen, they could distinguish at intervals the name of Yusuf. The disguised fugitive had been detected; and he was now trusting to his good speed to escape once more from his enemies. The darkness favoured him, for the chase was long continued, and still the cries were heard:

“ Lahnet be Sheitan — Curse on the devil — It is Yusuf the Janissary ! — It is the bloody-minded Aga ! — kiupek ! — kelb ! — dog ! — cur ! Bash pezevenk — headsman ! ” — every opprobrious epithet was in turn applied to the miserable man, as he fled before his pursuers ; saving the breath which they were exhausting in invective, for the mighty effort at self-preservation to which his instinct rather than his reason impelled him.

Again Yusuf escaped — again he stood beside his mother, and her hot tears fell on his anguished brow — and this time, in his agony of heart, he vowed upon the Korān that he would never leave her more.

It was a fearful vow ! The young strong man voluntarily resigning himself to a long life of imprisonment, and the never-sleeping dread of detection : coupled with the certainty of poverty, and the probability of actual want. But Yusuf was heart-broken ; he had fallen suddenly from a post of responsibility and power to a position the most cruel : he could no longer lift his head among his fellow men, for he had been hunted like a noxious animal by his kind — he stood

alone—fatherless — brotherless — his very name must no longer exist — his presence beneath the squalid roof of his mother be unsuspected, lest the ruin which had overtaken him should be drawn down on her head also ! He had been a Janissary, and the name had suddenly become a death-warrant ; it availed him nothing that there was no blood upon his hand ; the popular hatred had been seconded by the power and will of the Sultan, enforced by his new myrmidons, and the cry of destruction was on the wind.

Nothing remained to him save his mother — the widowed woman who smiled amid the bitterness of the hour as she received his vow, and felt that she was never again to part from him.

They were yet sitting side by side in silence, wrapped in gloomy imaginings, when a violent knocking upon the outer door of the dwelling aroused them from their lethargy of grief.

“ So soon ! ” exclaimed Yusuf fiercely ; “ Have they tracked the wolf to his lair so soon ! But the bold Aga of the Janissaries will not die the death of a vile animal without revenge ! ” And he drew from beneath his vest a gleaming yataghan,

and sprang towards the door of the apartment.

“Yusuf Aga,” said the old woman in an accent of sudden calmness; “what would you do? Can you war against a score? or would you pollute your mother’s floor with blood—Sen chok adam—you are much of a man; but you cannot do battle against a host.”

“I can at least sell my life dearly!” was the reply; “Mother, mother, you feel as a woman; but my heart is the heart of a desperate man. Loose me; and let me at least die the death of a brave soldier!”

“Yusuf Aga, once more I tell you that you are mad;” urged the aged Fatma, whose nerves had become suddenly strung by the great peril of her son: “Are you not taught by the Korān to love and to obey the mother of your youth? Do you love me, Yusuf; do you obey me, when you give yourself up to the bloodhounds, and sacrifice my gray hairs to foster your own pride? Think you that they will spare the aged woman, when the strong man is beaten down? If you can bear to give up the bosom upon which you

lay in your infancy to the knives of the butchers, go on, Yusuf Aga; and we shall die the death of blood and shame together."

"Allah buyûk der — God is great!" was the reply of the crushed and miserable man, as he extended his hand to his mother, and, followed her bidding as passively as an infant; "Do with me as you will."

The anxious Fatma waited no second bidding; and in the next moment Yusuf was skilfully, and without further resistance, concealed beneath the cushions upon which she had been sitting.

The uproar without had meanwhile become louder and more violent; and authoritative cries of "Atch! Atch! — open! open!" mingling with hoarser shouts of "Vour! Vour! — strike! break! — help! that we may force this crazy door, and make our own entrance to the den of the blood-hound!" rang through the desolate dwelling; and the trembling Fatma had scarcely time, after she had secreted her son, to fling a shawl over her head, before her chamber was crowded with strange men.

"Y'Allah — in the name of the Prophet;"

she shrieked out, without rising from the cushions upon which she had flung herself on their approach, at once to screen her child, and to deceive his pursuers ; “ What is this ? Who am I that men should break in upon me and fill my house, without leaving me time to cover my face ? Am I a Frank woman, that I am to be seen unveiled by every dog who wishes to eat dirt, and to show his prowess by wringing the widow and the afflicted ? What seek ye here ? Bana bak — look at me — what find ye to repay you for the shame of committing violence on a woman whose hair is gray, and whose step is feeble.”

“ Yavash, yavash — softly, softly, mother ;” said one of the party, as by the dim light of the solitary and untrimmed lamp, his companions were hurriedly searching every nook of the wretched habitation : “ We mean you no harm. What could your blood profit us ? though we might in truth put the bowstring about your neck, were it only to silence your howling. But we have seen that bash pezevenk — that wretch, Yusuf Aga the iron-handed Janissary, enter a

dwelling hereabout, and it may chance to be your's : so tell the truth, mother, and we will not only leave you in peace, but we will pay the service in piastres."

Hoarsely did the old woman laugh: "The Prophet has not so favoured me;" she said quietly; "or gladly would I earn so easily that which I need so much. But no — no — no Janissary will ever enter here—What have I to do with the men of blood? Kiupek der—they are dogs—Delhi der—they are madmen—their faces are blackened — Yok, yok, dostcum — no, no, my friends—you do but waste the time which you may need for your pursuit — stay here as long as you will—affiet ollah—much good may it do you—but you will find nothing more bloody-minded than yourselves under the roof of old Abdul's widow."

"Aferin — well done:" laughed her auditor in his turn; "You at least take your revenge on us in words: but we shall soon leave you, mother, for I hear the tread of feet upon your crazy stairs — my comrades are returning from their search. Before I go, however, this much

by way of warning — when next there is an outcry at your door, open more quickly, if you would avoid suspicion——”

“ Ne bilirim ! — what can I say ! ” returned Fatma : “ you scarce allow me time to waken from my sleep, and to wrap a shawl about my head, before you burst into my house. Masallah ! you are ill provided if you have not more wit than patience ; and will be baulked of your errand if you judge not more surely when you have left my house than when you entered it.”

The search had of course proved fruitless ; for the intruders, conscious that in the eagerness of their pursuit, they had violated one of the most sacred laws of their religion, which enjoins all good Musselmauns to respect the privacy of their women ; and anxious, if possible, to recover traces of the fugitive ; were satisfied with the scrutiny which they had bestowed on the narrow dwelling of Fatma, and did not attempt to push their investigation further, and to rouse the indignant woman to any loud and public expostulation or complaint.

In a few minutes, consequently, the house was

cleared ; but it was not until after a much longer interval that Fatma rose, and taking the lamp in her hand, jealously searched every recess throughout the whole building in order to assure herself that no spy yet lingered beneath her roof ; ere she flung back the coverings from the face of Yusuf, and removed the cushions among which he had been buried.

“ Shekiur Allah—praised be His name ;” she said devoutly ; “ my son is yet beside me—the Prophet has heard my prayer. But you look not upon me, Yusuf, my well-beloved—my Aga !—my heart beats quick, and my breath is troubled—I am choked with joy even amid my misery—and will you not pay me with one smile for the life that I have saved ?”

“ Mother, you know that I love you :” was the cold and despairing answer : “ It was my duty to obey you, and it is done—but all is now over—I am no longer Yusuf Aga—a brave man, and the associate of warriors—I am disgraced—With a weapon in my hand, I have crouched like a dog before my enemies ; and owed my safety to the sheltering garments of a woman.

While I live, I must hide my head that my shame may not be read upon my brow—and when I die, the houris of Paradise will turn aside, that they may not welcome a craven to their arms.”

“Ouf ! Ouf !” exclaimed the mother ; “guzum — my eyes ! talk not in a tone that breaks your mother’s heart ; if the Prophet waits at the door of the seventh heaven to welcome the souls of the brave and the beautiful, shall the good son be shut out ? And now, to our task, my Aga ; we may again be visited ; we must make for you a readier and a surer place of refuge, where you may defy the pursuit of the fierce-minded and the revengeful.”

“Even as you will, my mother ;” said Yusuf, as he pressed the hand of the old woman to his lips and forehead ; “henceforward all shall be even as you list.”

And Fatma was worthy of this trustfulness ; for months wore on, and although more than once her home was invaded by the feet of strangers searching for her son, he escaped detection ; and ultimately, if his existence were not

forgotten, he was at least suffered to live in peace in his place of concealment. Often did he yearn for liberty, and suggest to Fatma his desire to attempt once more to escape into the mountains, but she ever discountenanced the risk; and when he at length found himself unable to gain her concurrence, he made a second vow that until his fortunes changed — a circumstance that could only be achieved by a new revolution in the Empire, and which was consequently almost beyond hope; or that he was carried away to his dishonoured grave, he would never again trim his beard nor shave his head. Fatma heard the vow with thankfulness, for she felt that he had at least bent his heart wholly to his fortunes; and a gleam of joy passed over her wasted features as she remembered that she might yet possess the power of making those fortunes a shade less gloomy.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE LAST OF THE JANISSARIES—*continued.*

IT was an hour before noon, three months subsequently to the fatal day which had ruined her son, that Fatma Hanoum having occasion to visit the bazār in order to buy bread, and to collect the news with which she was wont to lighten the tedious hours of Yusuf's captivity, turned the key in the door of her dwelling; and with a slow and measured step moved aside from the direct road which led to Stamboul, and followed a narrow street of some length, stretching steeply up the side of one of the seven hills on which the city is built.

Arrived before a house of small but cleanly and comfortable appearance, she paused for a

moment ; and had she not been closely veiled, traces of great and violent agitation would have been discernible on her countenance. It was indeed a terrible moment for the heart of Fatma, which owned no idol but Yusuf, for in it she might perhaps be sealing his ruin ; and she painfully felt that she was at all events weaning its best affections from herself. But the mother hesitated not from selfish motives — if she could shed a ray of light over the prison-chamber of her child, it was cheaply purchased at the price of her own regret : sterner and more terrible misgivings assailed her, when she found herself actually on the point of executing a purpose on which she had pondered from the first week of Yusuf's domestication beneath her roof.

“ Inshallah — I trust in Heaven !” she murmured to herself when she at length raised the knocker and beat upon the door ; “ Allah will have mercy on a broken-hearted mother—I will not fear.”

The door fell back, and as she crossed the threshold, she was greeted with the courteous “Bouroûm” of the slave who opened it.

Fatma was a well-known and a welcome guest beneath the roof of Haïdè Hanoum ; and the dark eyes of her pretty daughter ever turned lovingly upon the widow of Abdul. It was long since they had looked upon her ; for, during the last few weeks, the women of Stamboul had feared to traverse the streets ; and it was moreover known to the friends of Fatma that she had lost her two brave boys on the day of massacre. On this occasion therefore she was doubly welcome ; and she had scarcely reached the door of the harem when its inmates uttered the kindly “ Khosh geldin—you are welcome ”—to which she as promptly replied “ Khosh buldûk—well-found——”

Room was immediately made for her upon the sofa beside her hostess, while the fair Saïryn seated herself at their feet, with her melancholy gaze fixed anxiously on the visitor.

In the next instant the elder lady clapped her hands, and as the attendant entered, she said softly—“ Chibouque cahveh getir—Bring pipes and coffee.” And when her guest had partaken of the sweet scented mocha from the fair hands

of the young Saïryn, and that she had applied her own lips to the ivory mouth-piece of the chibouque, and presented it to her guest, the slave withdrew, and the three friends were left alone.

“ Alhemdullilah — praises be to Allah ! the wife of Abdul is once more under my roof, and upon my sofa : ” commenced the hostess ; “ Evil days have fallen upon us, Effendim ; the sun has been hidden beneath a cloud ; but Allah buyûk der—God is great—it may again shine out.”

“ For me it can gleam only on graves ; ” said Fatma sadly : “ the days that are gone cannot be recalled—Who shall give back the dead ? ”

And her two listeners bowed their heads upon their hands, and echoed : “ Who shall give them back ? ”

“ My youngest was as the gazelle upon the mountain ; ” continued the widow ; “ fleet of foot, and graceful as the blossom that bends to the south wind : he was as a beyzadeh—the son of a lord. Stamboul held not one of nobler bearing—he has died the death of blood, and there are none to avenge him.” And again her

companions bent down, and murmured “ Chok chay — it is hard to bear ! ”

“ For my first-born :— ” pursued Fatma Hanoum, encouraged by the voice of sympathy : “ But why should I talk of him ? Was he not as a star during tempest — a light at midnight — a spring in the desert ? Was not his name mighty, and his arm strong ? ”

“ Amān ! amān !—alas ! alas ! ” sighed forth her auditors.

“ He was fair to look upon, and they who knew him listened to his words, for they were the words of wisdom ; ” again burst forth the old woman ; “ to her whom he loved he would have been as the wild vine that clings even to the death. Think, Saïryn ; ” she said suddenly, as she turned towards the fair girl who sat at her feet, “ think how dear the Hanoum your mother must have been to me, and how my aged eyes must have joyed to look upon your own beauty, when I sought you for his wife—the wife of my best and bravest — of my son Yusuf.”

A smothered sob burst from the gentle girl as she listened ; “ Haif, haif — shame, shame ! ”

she whispered, "that he too should be taken from you."

"And yet, better so;" said Fatma; "better that he should die in the pride of his beauty and of his strength, when he felt that his kismet—his fate, was bright, and that he was beloved; than linger in disgrace and poverty to be a byword and a scoff—the rejected of those to whom his love was once a triumph and a boast."

"Can there live one so vile!" exclaimed Saïryn in an accent of generous indignation, as she raised her head proudly, and swept back the long tresses from her brow: "Lives there one whom Yusuf Aga could once have loved, who would desert him now? Ajaib—wonderful! Did Allah people the world with reptiles?"

"Guzel, guzel—good, good:" said Fatma Hanoum: "you speak like one who has never known falsehood, and never suffered wrong—your heart is pure, kizem—my daughter; and your words are pleasant. Oh, that Yusuf, that my son, could rise from his grave to hear them!"

"Listen to me, my mother;" said the fair

girl; "I was taught to love the Aga: I looked upon him when he knew not that my eye was at the lattice; and I needed thenceforth no further teaching. I am worthy to be your daughter, for I shall never love another."

The glance was keen and searching that Fatma Hanoum turned on the young beauty as she ceased speaking; but the betrothed of Yusuf did not shrink beneath her eye. "Shekiur Allah—praise be to Heaven;" she said at length as she averted her gaze; "I am then not alone in my grief; my Aga has not fallen unwept."

A burst of tears from the melancholy Saïryn was her only answer; and it was a relief to both when Haïdè Hanoum was summoned from the apartment on some household business, and they were left together.

"Come hither, Saïryn—come hither, my Sultana;" said the old woman, as the tapestry curtain fell behind her hostess, and the echo of her slippered feet died away in the gallery beyond; "You are wise with the wisdom of riper age, and your heart is as the heart of a peri; I would share with you my joys and my sorrows,

for the sake of him who should have been your husband."

"Speak!" exclaimed the fair girl; "torture me not with caution; speak—Ekhi kateti—there is something!—Tell me all, as you hope for a place in paradise."

"You are young as a spring blossom," pursued the cautious mother, regardless of the emotion of her listener; "and beautiful as a houri; Your felech—your constellation may be a proud one. Who shall foretell your fate!"

"Could any cunning give me back my Aga, the light of my eyes, and the pulse of my heart, I would laugh all other grief to scorn"—broke in Sairyn; "my heart is in his grave, and the sky of my youth is clouded. Talk not to me of my own beauty, but tell me of your son; though the tale drown me in tears it will be welcome, for it will be of him."

"Listen then, child of my hope, and star of my evening sky;" said Fatma Hanoum in a shrill whisper, bending as she spoke towards her listener: "Utter no cry—tell it not to any—not even to the mother who gave you birth, lest the

wind of heaven bear away the tale to those who thirst for the blood of the mighty — Yusuf Aga lives !”

The warning was unnecessary ; for, as the startling truth broke upon her, the gentle Sairyn fell back senseless upon her cushions. Yet did not Fatma Hanoum yield to the terror which seized upon her as she witnessed the effect of her intelligence ; she rather hailed it as a proof of the deep and undying affection which she coveted for her son ; and with her accustomed self-possession she bathed the lips and brow of the happy girl with water, and soon saw her recover from her swoon.

“ Ne bilirim — what can I say ?” were the first words that she gasped out ; “ I am his, heart and soul, as when I was first vowed to him — But we must not whisper this, Effendimou — let us be jealous of our secret ; say but that you will take me to your bosom, and I will fly to share his griefs. Nay, deny me not” — she added passionately, as the aged woman was about to speak : “ I can understand all that you would tell me — Yusuf is a prisoner — shut out from all commerce

with his kind—debarred from the light of day—wasting away his strength in tears and darkness.—Is it not so, my mother? I am prepared for all this—only say that you have room for me in your heart, and I will escape hence, and dwell beneath the same roof as my promised lord—I will be the light to cheer his darkness, and the comfort that shall dry his tears. If my own heart does not deceive me, love can overmaster destiny; and Yusuf Aga may yet be happy. Only tell me that he will not reject me, mother; only promise that he will not spurn my affection; and, from the hour that I enter your dwelling, he shall be my world, and I will never nurse a wish of which he is not the object.”

And the beautiful young mourner flung herself at the feet of her companion, listening for the permission to blight her youth and her loveliness, with a wild eagerness that had in it something almost sublime.

“Allah buyûk der—Allah is great!” said the old woman, as the tears streamed from her dim eyes: “it shall be even as you will, my daughter: but think well ere you determine on

so desperate an act. We are poor, very poor—day by day misery and want are creeping on us, and we know not how to stay their steps—Yet, if you will share our poverty—if your love for Yusuf, and the power of your feleah indeed urge you to the sacrifice, come to me, and be to me as a daughter; for none save Yusuf can love you as I shall do——” And she folded her arms about the generous girl, and they mingled their tears together.

A week elapsed from the visit of Fatma to the harem of Haïdè Hanoum, when, as she sat one evening in the apartment which touched upon the prison-chamber of Yusuf, her eager eyes glancing at intervals towards the casement, and her head bent forward in the attitude of listening, a low signal, for which she had evidently been prepared, sounded from below, and she hurriedly rose from her sofa to obey it. Not a word was spoken until she returned to her accustomed station; and then a low burst of passionate joy escaped her, as she threw herself on the neck of a shrouded figure by which she had been followed.

“ Is all well, mother ? ” asked a sweet and tremulous voice ; “ Does the Aga Effendi know of my coming ? and may I meet him without fear ? Tell me truly, lest I die of shame beneath his frown — ”

“ He knows not of your resolve ; ” answered the mother ; “ How could I dare to make his heart leap with joy ere I was assured that you would not repent ? But, Shekiur Allah—praise be to Allah, you are here ; and he will share the joy of paradise when he learns the greatness of your love.”

The trembling girl heard no more. She sank upon the floor with her face buried in her cloak, and her breath came thick and fast as she sobbed out : “ Eh vah ! was this well done ? Shall I not be less than nothing in his sight when he first looks upon me ? ”

“ Allaha es marladek—Heaven preserve you, my daughter ; ” was the soothing reply ; “ The earth holds nothing so dear as you will be to Yusuf. Have you not resigned every thing for his sake ? ” and, as she spoke, she withdrew the mantle of the weeping girl, and seated her gently upon the sofa.

“ Khosh geldin — you are welcome ; a thousand times welcome ! and were this poor hovel the serail of a Sultan, still should you be its mistress. And now, hearken, my daughter — Yusuf is not far distant : he can even hear the murmur of our voices ; and I will speak to him—” and approaching the wall of the apartment, she said in a louder tone : “ Korkma — fear not, my son, although I am not alone — for the first time it is the voice of a friend which comes to you in your prison ; even of one who loves you.”

“ Kim boo — who is that ? ” was the bitter and incredulous rejoinder ; “ Who is there on earth save yourself who now wastes a thought on the wretched Yusuf ? ”

“ Whom would you that it should be ? ” asked the old woman, as calmly as her joy would permit her to put the question.

“ Alas ! I know not ; ” said the despairing prisoner. “ Those whom I loved have fallen from me, or have been murdered before my eyes — there lives not one on earth whom I now desire to see ; save, indeed, the maiden who should have been my bride, and that can never be—”

“ Tchabouk, tchabouk—quick, quick—let me fly to your feet Agamou — my Aga —” almost shrieked the excited Saïryn, as the words reached her ear; “ Say not that it can never be, for I am here !”

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE LAST OF THE JANISSARIES—*continued.*

Two years passed slowly by: and a wretched group sat together on the floor of a narrow room, divested of every sign and appliance of comfort. The ragged sofa which was its only furniture, stretched along three sides of the apartment, and revealed no longer the original pattern of its covering; a battered and discoloured brazier contained a few smouldering ashes, totally inadequate to their purpose; and a coarse earthen pitcher and cup stood a few paces distant, the only visible mean of refreshment for its melancholy occupants.

The most remarkable individual of the party was a man in the prime of life, but wasted by

famine; and with a thick and tangled beard falling to his girdle, which had evidently once been of the deepest black, but which now, like the elf-locks that escaped from beneath his dingy and well-worn turban, was chequered with grey. Beside him sat a woman on whom time and sorrow had alike wrought their bitter will. Her brow was deeply furrowed, and her long sharp features gave indication of a craving which had been often unappeased; while the cloud that dulled her large dim eye spoke a despair in which words would have been less eloquent.

But there was yet another in this miserable company; the strong man and the aged woman had not paid the penalty of famine and misery alone. There was yet another, whose unearthly and transparent beauty might well have charmed the gaunt demon from his prey! It was a young fair woman — so young, and so fair, that she seemed rather like a dream-born vision than a denizen of earth. Her dress was scanty and squalid; and on her knee she pillowed a dead infant — a miniature of her own loveliness; for whom the fountains of life had been dried up by

the gnawing want of the mother. Her dark wild eyes, flashing with a fierce and unnatural light, glanced rapidly from her cold burthen to the face of her wretched husband, and thence back again upon her child: but only by that quick and frenzied look did she venture to ask if all were indeed over; for she feared the answer that his quivering lips would utter. Suddenly a thought — a memory — a dream of past days, flashed across the mind of Yusuf—for it was indeed Yusuf who sat beside his childless wife — and a sickly smile gleamed for a moment over his pallid face.

“Mother;” he said, in a low hollow voice; “the Prophet has given me a glimpse of the past — we may yet save my wife — my beloved one — a while longer. Well do I know that it is not for yourself that you mourn, but for her—for the self-sacrificing woman, who has blessed me at the expence of her own misery. In the years when I was free, and a brave man among the warriors, a Bey of the palace came to me one day for gold; I lent him all that I had: they were but two purses, but they availed him much; and

he swore by his beard that he would repay them when I claimed the debt. How say you? Will you go to the house of Tasin Bey, and say to him — ‘ My lord, I am the mother of Yusuf Aga, whom, while he lived, you loved; I am old and poor—I lack bread, and can find none—my son lent you two purses — will you not pay them back to her for whom he had hoarded them?’ ”

“ Yusuf janum—my soul;” faltered out the old woman: “ it is so long since you have had dealings with the great ones of the earth, that you have forgotten of what clay the Prophet made them. Listen to me: to-morrow I will enter beneath the roof of Tasin Bey, and I will tell him that I am the mother of the Aga, who was his friend: if he welcome me to his home, and put bread before me, then will I remind him of the debt; but, if his brow be cold, and his words few, I will not peril your pride when the avowal would avail nothing. The debtor wears his conscience upon his face; and even as you read there, so will it be.”

“ You are wise, and I am as nothing before

you :” conceded the heart-worn Yusuf ; “ Be it as you have said.”

“ He may perchance greet me kindly ;” resumed Fatma, her hope growing more strong, as she recalled the friendship which once existed between the young noble and her son ; “ And should he do so, the rest will be sure ; and we may yet have rice wherewith to make the pillauf of plenty for our precious Sairyn — For the babe :” she added more sadly, “ it is already a spirit sporting in the gardens of Paradise, and sleeping in the hearts of the ever-blooming roses watered by the houris.”

“ Speak you of my child ?” murmured out a low voice ; “ He is a-hungered, and I have no food — bring him bread, and all will yet be well.”

The wretched man buried his face in his hands, and groaned aloud.

“ Weep not, Agamou — my Aga :” said the fair young mother, laying her dead child softly on the floor beside her, and approaching her husband : “ I have no hunger, and he has now ceased to pine : why, then, do you grieve ? We

have suffered much, but, for me, I shall soon fall asleep, for I feel my eyelids heavy; and you will not awaken me, save to still the wailings of my babe if he should seek for me."

And as Yusuf folded her to his heart, she sank into the deep dreamless slumber which so often precedes the death of famine.

"Allah buyûk der — God is great:" said Yusuf: "but this is almost more than I can bear. Years have passed over me in pain and terror, and for myself I would not murmur even now: but to see her thus! What can be done, my mother? — think for me; for my brain wanders, and I am as a child, not knowing how to guide my steps."

"Bear up yet this night:" urged the aged woman in reply; "to-morrow the sun may rise unclouded—Who shall say?"

And he did bear it—and early on the ensuing morning Fatma Hanoum folded her tattered cloak about her, and sped to the dwelling of Tasin Bey; and, despite the jests of the idle attendants who thronged the entrance-hall, and who jeered alike at her age and at her raiment,

she waited patiently until the Bey passed through the apartment, on his way to the caïque which was waiting to convey him to the palace of the Sultan.

“Ne istersiniz—what do you want, woman?” he asked impatiently, as she placed herself upon his path; “Do you not see that I am in haste?”

“And do you not see on your side that I am in want?” sternly demanded the old woman in her turn: “I shall hold my lord back but an instant in his errand of pride. By the memory of Yusuf Aga, whom you once loved, I come to conjure you to look upon my misery.”

“Yusuf Aga died the death of a traitor;” said the Bey with a dark frown, “and I will not that my dwelling be polluted by his name; but you are old and needy, and his treason should not be visited upon your grey hairs by one who loved him ere he fell. Step aside, Ef-fendim; I have yet a moment to spare; and you shall tell me the story of your grief.”

The indignant Fatma had well nigh vented her disappointed wrath in reproaches when the Bey commenced his address; but, as she raised her

eye to his, she did not read there the same stern expression which sat upon his brow ; and she restrained her anger. Obeying the motion of his hand, she passed silently from the hall to an inner room ; and was shortly followed by the young courtier, who cast down the tapestry curtain of the door behind him as he entered, ere he said hurriedly—

“ What is this ? Are you indeed the mother of Yusuf Aga, my friend ? Why do I see you in the garb of utter want, when he must have told you that I owe him gold ? Did you fear that I should deny the debt ? ”

“ Y’Allah — in the name of the Prophet, no, my lord : ” replied the delighted Fatma : “ but the ear of the rich is heavy, and the heart of the happy, shut— You ask me why I have been dumb so long — I have no other answer — na to ne — there it is.”

“ You have done me wrong ; ” pursued the Bey : “ nor have you judged more wisely in betraying your errand to my slaves. Know you not that the name of Yusuf Aga is to be blotted from the memory of men ? I may doubt in my turn, if you be indeed his mother.”

“Inshallah ! — the debt is two purses,” was the laconic reply of the old woman.

“Hai, Hai — true, true:” said the Bey readily — “and first I will deliver to you the piastres:” and taking an embroidered purse from his girdle, he counted the coin into the trembling hand of the overjoyed Fatma.

“And now;” he continued, as she hid the treasure among her rags; “tell me of your gallant son. Often have I wept over his memory; but, Inshallah — I trust in Allah, I shall yet meet him in Paradise.”

“May the houris be long in pouring forth the sherbet of my lord;” said the aged woman: “May his days on earth be many, and his sorrows few, for Yusuf loved him as a brother; and nobler heart bled not on that day of murder than that of my noble boy !”

“Did you look on him in death?” demanded the Bey: “or was he lost among the many who were seen no more?”

“I watched over him beneath my own poor roof;” replied the mother: “I saw his bright eye dim, and his bold heart weak—and yet I live.”

Her listener paused for a moment, and a strange expression swept across his brow : “ Lingered he long in misery ?” he asked in a shrill whisper.

“ Long, long—look at this withered arm — it upheld him till it failed.”

Again there was a momentary silence, which was broken by the low tones of the courtier : “ Mother,” he said : “ you are poor, and need gold—a wild fancy has come upon me —I could almost dream that your son yet lives — If it be so, deceive me not ; for thus he must, like yourself, be in want and misery. What do you fear ? Did I not love him well ? and is not my hand open ? Why should you cheat me with false words, as though I had been one of those who wrought him evil ? Nay,” he added, more peremptorily : “ it is too late to throw the mantle of falsehood over the garb of truth ; you tremble, and your limbs fail you—Otour, otour—sit, sit, mother—my friend Yusuf lives !”

“ What shall I say ?” exclaimed Fatma : “ my lord is as one who has stood behind the curtain of knowledge, and read the characters of

the wise men—it is even as he has said—Yusuf Aga lives.”

“And where?” eagerly enquired the young noble: “Tell me where I may once more look upon, and listen to him—my heart yearns to my friend.”

“La illaha illallah—there is but one Allah:” murmured the mother beneath her breath: “Yusuf is saved—Sairyn is saved—and I may go down to the place of tombs in peace. Amān, amān—alas, alas—why came not this help from heaven in time to turn aside the hand of the destroying angel from their precious babe!”

“Tell me, mother;” repeated the Bey earnestly: “tell me only the retreat of Yusuf, that I may hasten to mingle my tears with his.”

“Nay, not so, agam—my lord;” said Fatma gravely, as a chill crept over her heart: “I have already betrayed to you a secret which was scarce mine own: more I dare not do; but I will pour into the ear of my wretched son the glad story of your kindness, and it shall then be even as he wills.”

“To-morrow, then;” said the noble, as he moved towards the door; “I will urge you no further now: the heart of Yusuf shall decide the rest. I am high in favour with the Padishah, and who shall say that the pardon of your son may not be won by his early friend.”

“Allah es marladek — Heaven take you into its holy keeping:” sobbed out the transported mother: “There is but one God, and Mahomet is his Prophet.”

“Farewell, Effendim:” smiled the Bey; “I can delay my departure no longer; but I pray you leave not my house until you have dipped your spoon into my pillauf.” And clapping his hands, he summoned a slave, and bade him lead the aged Fatma to the door of the harem, and commend her to the care of the women, that she might not depart from beneath his roof fasting. “Tell not your errand to any:” he added, as he turned to depart; “there is yet much to be done ere the tale be bruited in the city streets.” And he hurried to his boat, followed by a blessing such as few have ever breathed.

Fatma Hanoum feasted—withstood the thousand questions which assailed her on all sides from the women of the Bey; and finally set forth on her return to her own wretched dwelling, laden with food, and bright with hope. Once more there was joy in the prison-chamber of the wasted Aga—once more—and how cruel a proof was this of the utterness of their previous despair—they talked to each other of *the future*—hitherto they had not dared to do it! With such a friend—by whom, even amid prosperity and happiness, he had been unforgotten, for what might Yusuf not hope? Even the childless mother, imbibing a portion of the delight which beamed upon the brow of her husband, pressed her stiffened infant to her breast, and smiled a sickly smile. Alas! none could give her back her dead!

“Mother;” said Yusuf earnestly: “can it indeed be true that I shall again look upon one of the friends of my happy days? It is as a promised light from heaven! It is so long since I have listened to the voice of sympathy, save from the lips of those who were suffering for my sake,

that I know not if I shall outlive the joy ! Delay him not, my mother, lest my heart burst with the suspense : lead him here to-morrow, that I may commence a new existence, and feel that I have yet a tie to the bright world on which I have not looked for long and weary years."

"Have you no fear, my son?" ventured the old woman : "It is a mighty trust !"

"Does he not deserve it at my hands?" asked Yusuf in reply ; "I were base, vile, if I could doubt him. No, my mother ; the Prophet is weary of our tears, and we shall yet be happy. And you, my Sairyn, my beautiful betrothed, who have lavished on the captive and dishonoured Yusuf all the love that you had vowed only to the bold and favoured Aga, you shall be as the light of my eyes, and as the pulse of my heart, when the beam of heaven once more shines upon my brow, and the blessing of Allah is upon my fortunes. Tell me, Sultana of my soul, shall it not be thus?"

And the beautiful girl hid her face upon his shoulder, and murmured out : "So shall it be, if the Prophet hear my prayer !"

The eyes of Yusuf did not close in sleep during that long, long night : but he lay upon his rude cushions, buried in sweet and retrospective thought. All the proudest days of his strong youth passed in array before him, and he remembered the high aspirings and ambitious hopes with which he had been used to colour his existence. Hastily he reviewed the hour which prostrated his fortunes — he could not bear the memory—and with a smile, mingled with a tear which would not be suppressed, the picture terminated with the fair creature who was pillowed on his bosom — the victim of her holy and earnest love !

The morning dawned at length — the blessed day was come which was to restore to the heart and arms of Yusuf the friend of his manhood ; and the hour was yet early at which the aged Fatma started on her anxious expedition. She tarried long—or it seemed long to the weary watcher whom she had left : but when she came, the tale she had to tell repaid him for all his suffering.

Kindly and courteously had the Bey received

her: again she had eaten of his pillauf, and drank of his cup: he had listened to all the story of Yusuf's sufferings; and vowed on the Korān to terminate them. Already had he asked a boon of the Sultan, who had smiled upon his suit; and Fatma felt that the boon could be no other than the pardon of his friend. Affairs of state detained him; but, his duty done, he would hasten to the presence of the captive, soon to be so no longer; and meanwhile a slave had followed the footsteps of the old woman, and then returned to his master, to serve him as his guide.

Again and again did the happy Fatma tell her tale; and the theme was still unchanged when a heavy stroke on the door of the house summoned her to receive the expected guest; and, hastily snatching a shawl from the sofa, and folding it about her face, she descended to draw the bolt.

There was the silence of a moment: and the heart of Yusuf beat high as he sprang from the floor to meet his friend; "He is here, Sāiryn; janum — my soul, he is here!" he exclaimed

with a burst of his former joyousness — but his transport was short-lived. A piercing shriek rang from below — it was the voice of Fatma ; and in another moment the tramp of many feet sounded upon the stairs !

In an instant the yataghan of Yusuf was in his hand, and he stood glaring like a roused tiger in the direction of the sound. “ Too late ! ” — he shouted in his despair : “ Oh, that you had not tarried, my friend ! my friend ! Had you speeded, you might yet have saved me ! ”

But as the agonized cry escaped from the lips of the doomed man, the generous dream was at an end ; for, on the threshold of the chamber stood Tasin Bey, surrounded by a band of armed attendants. For a moment the arch-traitor paused, in doubt that the wretched object before him could indeed be Yusuf Aga ! For a moment he remained paralyzed with horror as he gazed upon the gaunt and haggard wretch, who, with elf-locks hanging matted upon his shoulders, and a tangled and loathsome beard depending to his girdle, his cheeks sunk and hollow, and his eyes bright with a fierce and blinding light,

met him midway of the apartment ; his weapon raised over his head, and his blue and livid lips parted above his fast-clenched teeth !

Ere he had recovered his horror, Yusuf struck—With a yell like that of a hunted savage his weapon was buried to the hilt in the heart of one of the party who had advanced a step in front of his comrades ; and it seemed as though the blow had loosed the spell which had bound the senses of their leader ; for ere the desperate Aga could withdraw his weapon, the Bey had pronounced the fatal word, and instantly a score of his followers rushed upon their victim. But the soul of Yusuf appeared to have called back its strength in his last moment of trial, and he struggled like a demoniac—Suddenly there was a frightful gushing groan—a heavy fall—and he lay senseless at the feet of his persecutors — yet no steel had touched—no cord had polluted him—he lay bathed in blood, but it had gushed from his mouth and nostrils — Nature, so long neglected, had been overtaxed in this hour of passion, and he had burst an artery.

When they raised him up, he was beyond

their power. Allah, in his own good time, had taken to himself the Last of the Janissaries !

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